



VITA WA WATU

**(More Notes from a New
Afrikan P.O.W. Journal)**

BOOK EIGHT

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VITA WA WATU
(More Notes from a New Afrikan POW Journal)
Book Eight

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CONTENTS

About These Notes

BLACK LIBERATION, A Speech by James Forman (Nov. 1967)

Afterwords: Notes on the Transition of the "Black Liberation"
Phrase, Concept, and Movement

by Mwalimu Shanna and Seldom Seen

- A. To Re-Build, Preserve, and Pass On
 - 1. New Afrikan Youth, and Historical Discontinuity
 - 2. National Liberation Revolution, and Counter-Revolution
 - 3. An Exemplary (Point of) Reference: The "New Negro Movement" and the African Blood Brotherhood
- B. New Phrases, Evolving Concepts: Part One
 - 1. "Black Liberation" --- In Transition
 - 2. Phrases and Concepts in Transition
 - 3. An Exemplary (Point of) Reference: "Black Power"
- C. New Phrases, Evolving Concepts: Part Two
 - 1. "Black Liberation" --- Its Meaning as a Phrase and Concept
 - 2. "Black Liberation" --- The Development of the Concept
 - 3. To Correctly Interpret "Historical Context"
- D. The "Masses" --- Their Role in Social Development and the Revolutionary Process
- E. Comments on "What and how to organize?"
- F. Final Notes

About These NOTES

With this issue of VITA WA WATU, We resume publication of Notes from a New Afrikan POW Journal. The last issue of the Journal (Book Seven), was published in 1980 by the New Afrikan Prisoner Organization (NAPO) shortly before the dissolution of that organization. As with the Journal, VITA WA WATU is produced by imprisoned New Afrikan Independence Movement cadre.

The speech by James Forman represents the first of what We call our "Reprint Series." It was originally printed by SDS, and We've reprinted it as it appeared in the original, except for the addition of the subtitles introducing sections.

James Forman, former Executive Secretary and Director of International Affairs of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (later the Student National Coordinating Committee), delivered the speech "Black Liberation," on November 23, 1967, before the Western Regional Youth Conference in Los Angeles, California.

Near the end of his presentation, Forman expressed concern for our need to preserve a record of our experiences by saying:

...it is extremely hard to pass on to future generation ideas and information if they are all in the oral tradition...for the future generation we must write. We must write from our own experience, for only we have all the insights into what we mean.

We reprint the speech here, first, as a way of preserving and passing on to present and future generations, ideas and information from a stage of our Nation's struggle that's not readily available, widely discussed, and not full understood.

Secondly, We reprint the speech as background for an exercise in analysis and reinterpretation of "black liberation" as a phrase, concept, and movement. Our contention is that the "black liberation movement" has lost its revolutionary character.

In Afterwords, We've chosen several stated or implied themes from Forman's speech, which We use to treat ideas under development, from our own perspective. No attempt is made to "fully" treat these themes, because We think they're sufficiently broad and part of an ongoing process of struggle, and thus "exhaustion" in a limited number of pages (or books) ain't possible. We think that these themes deal with some of the conceptual and organizational questions that our movement will repeatedly address in the months and years to come...

There is no copyright on VITA WA WATU. It can be quoted at length --- We ask only that VWW be credited, and that a copy of any material using such quotes be forwarded to us.

Finally, We welcome--encourage--the comments, criticisms, and suggestions of our readers...Sisters...and Brothers...Comrads.

Re-Build!

For VITA WA WATU,

Atiba Shanna

Black Liberation
A SPEECH BY JAMES FORMAN
November 23, 1967

"Black Liberation --- The only correct way to discuss those words is from a historical context. Too often we look at an event, a situation, a slogan, a life history, a rebellion, a revolution...and assume that its present characteristics have always been its past. For instance, in Vietnam we see a heroic struggle occurring in which the Vietnamese people are using revolutionary armed force to repel their aggressors. Sometimes we fail to understand that the South Vietnamese had a policy of self-defense for at least four years -- from 1955 to 1960 -- before they engaged in offensive armed struggle to liberate their country from the oppression of the Diem Regime and its United States backers. When the student movement started in February 1960, many of the activists thought they had begun the black revolution. Many of us failed to understand the historical conditions which produced us and the actions we were taking against segregation in this country, especially in the Deep South.

A Tradition of Resistance

While it is beyond the limits of my time to go into a long discussion of the history of our people, it is absolutely essential to see our history as one of resistance. Our ancestors began to resist the enforced slavery long before they left the shores of Africa. Those of our brothers who sold their kinship into slavery found that there was resistance in the interior of Africa. The captured African did not voluntarily go to the shores of Africa and willingly board the slave ships that brought our forefathers to this alien land. They resisted in Africa.

They resisted the moment they were wrenched from the shores of Africa.

They resisted on the high seas.

They resisted in Virginia, Texas, Mississippi, South Carolina, wherever they were forced to work as slaves building the so-called great white civilization of the United States and the Western World.

We resist today!

We must continue at every step of the ladder of our liberation to view those previous rungs as battles for which we fought; as battles for which we paid dearly in our blood, sacrifice, and toil; as battles which we could not win unless those below were willing to resist, dead though they may be, unknown, unsung. Many of those names no one knew; but they resisted and they died in the liberation struggle.

Those of us who live are obligated to keep the unknown martyrs before our consciousness and to dedicate ourselves to more resistance until there are no more rungs of resistance, no more ladders of resistance, but only the ravines, the fields, the mountains, the Inner Cities and streets of revolution.

Accommodation and Revolutionary Leadership

The opposite of resistance is accommodation. It is certainly true today that many of our people are accommodating themselves to the system of capitalism in which we live. Personally, I do not view much of the history of our people as accommodation. There may have been a few who accommodated themselves to slavery, a few informers here and there. Even during the period of Reconstruction, throughout the 20th Century, in the efforts of the Niagara movement, the Garvey movement, and most of the actions of the Civil Rights movement must be seen, from my viewpoint, as the history of a people who were and are resisting a form of neo-slavery that existed after the so-called Emancipation Proclamation.

It is true that much of the visible leadership in the past has often been characterized as accommodating leadership, but I am not discussing just the visible leadership. Leaving aside judgments on certain visible symbols of leadership, I am talking about the masses of our people. The masses of black people have never accommodated themselves to the United States.

And it is among the masses that our youth may work.

Only from the masses of black people will there come revolutionary leadership, a leadership that will not accommodate itself, that will continue to resist as our ancestors resisted, a leadership that will not mind dying for independence and freedom not only for blacks but for all oppressed.

For those of us who consider ourselves Freedom Fighters, it is imperative that we view our history in this manner -- a history of resistance, not of accommodation. It is imperative that we realize that our culture and our people have been able to resist to survive and to make it possible for us to deal more death blows to our oppressors.

Correctly Interpreting History

Why have I devoted so much time to interpreting our history as one of resistance? There are several reasons. First, I assume all of us have certain factual knowledge of our history -- and those of us who do not will soon acquire that. But I am convinced that many of us have not interpreted those facts correctly. Certainly my interpretation is open to debate, a debate in which I am prepared to engage, and defend. Second, I am convinced that a faulty interpretation of our history is often damaging to our cause. For instance, Johnny Wilson, a member of SNCC, recently attended a conference in Czechoslovakia where there were many representatives of the National Liberation Front and the government of the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam. The Vietnamese there assembled, people who are fighting and dying daily by the hundreds for their freedom, asked the American representatives to sing the song "We Shall Overcome." They stated that they had sung the song often, for it gave them inspiration and much hope. One of the brothers from Newark attending the conference, who may or may not have participated actively in the rebellion, jumped up and said: "No. We don't sing that song. The people who sang that song were crazy. They were nonviolent, and we ain't." The Vietnamese were stunned. They are not crazy for singing it and I do not think all of us who sang it were crazy. People do not sing it today for many reasons. But the brother from Newark was only in Prague because there was a historical relationship between his presence there and the manner in which he got there. I am well aware that my presence here is due to many factors, but if it had not been for the people who sang "We Shall Overcome" there is no question in my mind that I would not be here today.

To view our history as one of resistance is to recognize more clearly the colonial relationship that we have with the United States. Traditionally, when one thinks of colonialism, images of foreign powers occupying another land and subjecting its people, are the kinds of mental pictures we frame. But our own colonial status is unique in that we are the descendants of people enslaved and transplanted into a colonial status. The rhetoric, the false claims, the meaningless phrases, all these try to tell us that we are citizens; that we are Americans. I will not dwell on the absurdity of that, for we all know too well that the internal rebellions in this country, led by Watts, would not occur if in fact that was the case.

The serious conditions in which we find ourselves as a people demand that we begin talking more of the colonized and the colonizer. If we begin to use those terms more and to describe their inner workings, especially the economic base on which colonialism is founded and the industrial-military complex of Western countries which sustain it, we shall definitely advance the cause of our liberation. Any colonized people are exploited people. But all exploited people are not colonized. That is to say, we can have in certain situations, as we do in many countries around the world, people exploited because of their class positions in society. Within the United States there are many exploited whites, but they are not colonized. In most instances they form a part of the colonizing class. When Fanon says we must stretch a Marxist analysis when we look at colonial situations, he is referring to this condition, even though he didn't explain it.

The Limitations of "Skin Analysis"

Unless my historical understanding is incorrect, the colonial relationships since the 15th Century -- with the exception of Ireland -- have all involved white europeans and their American white descendants colonizing the darker people of the world. Therefore,

race is intimately involved in the colonizing experience. My own experience in various situations with my brothers and sisters has led me to conclude that it is necessary to view ourselves in these terms -- the colonized and the colonizer -- if we are not to fall into the trap of seeing the causes of our problems as merely skin causes, black skin versus white skin. A purely skin analysis of the cause of and continuing responsibility for our condition not only is theoretically incorrect, but, because it is theoretically incorrect, will lead to some serious mistakes in programming.

When we view our colonial situation in the United States, it is easy, it is emotionally satisfying at times, and it may be the first step toward nationalism, which we must promote, to view the cause as one solely of skin. But if our analysis remains there and we do not work to broaden our understanding, we are headed for a trick, a frustrating pit of despair.

A purely skin analysis makes it very difficult to guard against reactionary nationalism, for instance. Dr. Hastings Banda of Malawi would undoubtedly and without question tell you that he is an African nationalist. A man with black skin -- yet he visits Taiwan, tells us the United States is right for fighting in Vietnam, and is willing to open diplomatic relations with South Africa.

There is an aspect of our colonial experience, however, which we often fail to examine, to look at -- to determine its meaning for today and for tomorrow -- and which may help to shed light on the skin analysis. Hence, too often we overlook that our enslavement involved a duality -- an alliance by some of our Africa ancestors with white slavers. The ruling classes of many African territories and nations, the African visitors in many skirmishes and wars with other Africans, co-operated with the white ruling classes and their merchants to get us to this country. This examination should in no way imply that I do not place the greatest burden upon Western Civilization for our enslavement, but I do not think it does much good to overlook that many Africans were willing to make a profit off our bodies.

Today, in many instances, we see similar situations -- exploitation of blacks by blacks, especially in Africa (and I could call a list of countries), and here in the United States. This exploitation has its own historical roots, and any effective programming which we will do in the future must be aware of this current fact from its historical and class basis. A more profound analysis of this problem -- the co-operation of the ruling-class Africans with the slaving white merchants -- has been made by a young historian, Walter Rodney, whom we met in Tanzania.

Brothers and Sisters, bold analysis of the last six or seven paragraphs of this paper brings into sharp focus three ways of looking at the fundamental causes of our problems: 1) We can take the position that says we are exploited solely because of our skin color. This I call the skin analysis; 2) We can take a second position that says our exploitation is due solely to our class position in this society. This I call the exclusive class analysis; 3) We can take a third position that says our exploitation results from both class positions and race. Given all that I said, it is obvious that I hold to the third position.

Reactionary (Neo-Colonial) Nationalism

The absolute necessity for me to raise this as a discussion item arises from my own experience within the Movement. Once during a discussion with one of my brothers, I used the word Marxian. He jumped up and pounded on the table and yelled: "But, Motherfucker, Marx was not a black. He was not black, do you hear! He was a white writer."

Just recently we have come through some painful discussions in the New York area and have seen some very deep tensions in the black community resulting from conflicts on this issue. And this is very important, because one brother was kidnapped because of this issue, and three other brothers had to go get him and almost got killed in the process -- so the situation is very pressing on my consciousness. For instance, the march on the Pentagon was advertised in Inner City Voice, a revolutionary journal that started in Detroit after the rebellion. This journal called upon blacks to join the confrontation at the pentagon. In the meantime there had been all sorts of discussion among some black militants on the East Coast about what should be the relationship of black people to the

March. The brothers and sisters from Detroit did not know about these conflicts and therefore came to Washington to participate in the demonstration. They wanted the National Liberation Front, so they said, to know that there were blacks opposed to the war and ready to confront the warmakers. However, at the march they were torn asunder because there were brothers and sisters who began to say: Black people are not relating to that thing. That's a white thing. And one so-called spokesman for a Black Power committee said: Black people are interested in their communities...And I'm still quoting him...The whites started this war, so let them end it. We're tired of marching. We're headed for a black thing, and that thing don't include marching on the pentagon. We're concerned, this Black Power spokesman concluded, about the cutbacks in the Poverty program. We want jobs and better communities.

"Black Power" -- Revolutionary and Reactionary

Within SNCC today, we are discussing revolutionary Black Power as opposed to reactionary Black Power, for we have seen instance after instance in which conservative forces have tried to explain away or excuse the revolutionary aspect of Black Power. But, an understanding of what is meant by revolutionary Black Power hinges on how one sees the fundamental causes of our condition today. From this analysis will flow many things and many decisions and many ways of solving our problems.

Within the concept of the colonized we must begin to speak more of the dispossessed - those who do not have. This is important, for it determines where alliances are made. The dispossessed unite with the dispossessed. It must be clearly understood that the nature of the colonial experience is that racism is inherent in all its manifestations. Even if the dispossessed unite with the dispossessed, or the exploiters who are responsible for the colonizing are kicked out, the legacy of racism and remnants of the colonial experience remain and must be uprooted. The Chinese are saying in part through their Cultural Revolution that even though one eliminates the structural forms of capitalism, there are capitalistic ideas and thoughts that still remain and must be combated.

As Chairman H. Rap Brown stated to the Black Caucus at the National Conference on New Politics, the dispossessed in the United States are the people of African descent, the Puerto Ricans, the Mexican Americans, and many poor whites. We are the vanguard of that group because of our historical oppression and the racism inherent in it. Whether we will live up to our historical role and lead forward that revolution remains to be seen.

It is our job to go forth from this conference using whatever means necessary to liberate ourselves and other oppressed people, not only in the United States but throughout the world. In order to do this, we must wage an unrelenting struggle against racism and exploitation of man. We must work, not for ourselves, but for the unborn generations that will carry humanity and our people to new heights, to a world without racism, to a world of no more resistance, but only a community of concern. For this world we must be prepared to fight and to die. And we must believe that we will win. We must believe that our fight and our deaths are not in vain.

Go To The Masses -- And Work

How do we organize and what do we organize? One year ago, within SNCC, we called for the formation of all-inclusive political units, independent of the Democratic and Republican parties. We called for the formation of the Freedom Organizations. You can choose any name, so long as it is an independent political organization that will service the needs -- the total needs -- of the people. These organizations must build within themselves committees to deal with the economic, political, social, cultural, education, and welfare needs of the people. They must have youth organizations, and it is up to us -- those of us with the commitment to total change, with energy and time, to go to the masses and organize them -- to do this work. One may well speak of revolution, but unless there is day-to-day, block-to-block, city-to-city, and nationwide organizing, there can be fundamental changes in our lives. Those of us who consider ourselves politically hip, those of us who feel we have a consciousness, those of us who are prepared to take care of business -- must recognize that unless there is mass participation by black people in efforts to bring about

revolution, then that revolution will not occur. No matter how long we talk about it, rhetoric is not a substitute for work.

In fact, Brothers and Sisters, I do not mean to sound pretentious or presumptuous, or to degrade anyone's effort -- but the reality is that there are so few people willing to do work among the masses of the people. That is why this conference is very important and we should all thank the organizers, for they have been willing to work, to mimeograph, to arrange meetings, to stay up late in order to organize. Blueprints for revolution have been around for a long time. And everyone that I have read has stressed the importance of active political organization. And in fact, man, you got to work in order to do any of that.

We are distributing at this conference a pamphlet prepared for a programmatic workshop of SNCC, entitled "Don't Shut Me Out," or "How to Become a Good Political Organizer," selling for 50 cents. The pamphlet is not perfect -- nothing is. But there are some valuable suggestions in that pamphlet that may help you in your work. I repeat, and I speak out of experience: There is much to do and there are few to do it. We must work, work, work.

We Must Protect Ourselves

And, as we work in the Inner Cities and in the rural areas, we must be prepared to guard against the sabotaging of our work, the infiltration of our cadres by the FBI and the CIA and local police agents. We must not allow the McClellan Committee, the Eastland Committee, the House Un-American Activities Committee, to isolate SNCC, to destroy the Panthers, to arrest and imprison other militants -- because the Man is afraid of RAM. We have to build visible defense committees and link all the militants in some confederation so that it will be more difficult to isolate and destroy any of us. Inner City newspapers must be established to provide alternative methods of communication, for all of us know that the Man is not going to print anything but negative news of our Movement.

Finally, we must protect our Brothers and Sisters; and even as I say this, there are some brothers in jail about whom there is not much active concern because we have allowed our own internal contradictions to divide us. This brother may not have done that the way some brothers would have done it. Therefore, he is left isolated. And to the degree that this occurs, all of us stand to be destroyed. Granted that the forward thrust of the Movement cannot be stopped, it can be halted and set back. Time and energy, the two most important assets we have, can be uselessly spent if we are not immediately responsive to crises or ready to take legal action in behalf of brothers that are arrested. This last point cannot be overstressed, for the Man is picking up brothers all over the country and sometimes there is no response to their arrest. This is not the case with respect to visible symbols of leadership: Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, and so forth and so on, and maybe even myself. It must also be true for the man behind the mimeograph sheet or the one who is taking care of business. In other words, we have to work to eliminate the class bias that is often apparent in many of our organizations and efforts.

And now, brothers and sisters, I must depart from the written script. I had some other notes, but they are not here. As I said, I am very tired and I have had to read this paper because I do not trust myself, my ability to be very coherent without leaning on the paper. I repeat it is very important that we begin to write down our thoughts. We must get away from the oral tradition. For six years, as I served as the Executive Secretary, I would make speeches and none of them would be written. That means that if something had happened to me, if I had been annihilated in battle, then whatever ideas I may have had would not have been transmitted, for they would have been lost. That is the problem with the Period of Reconstruction in our history. There were many strong black cats who were sheriffs and who were other lawmakers, but there is not much, if anything, written about them; nothing that we can read -- and many of them could write. As a people, we have the oral tradition, and they employed that; but for the future generation we must write. We must write from our own experience, for only we have all the insights into what we mean.

To Counteract Reaction

However, now I want to talk about five points, or several things that we must do to counteract possible reactions and attempts to destroy us by the Man. The first thing we must do is stop all this loose talk and keep our mouths shut. Because cats are sitting around doing loose talk and the Man is gathering information and intelligence. The Man is piecing together all this loose talk and making up conspiracy charges and what-have-you. This very well may have been what happened in New York, because there were police informers involved in the charges. I don't know -- but certainly they were framed.

I know this is what happened with the Statue of Liberty case, because policeman Woods was the man who conceived of the idea, pushed the brothers into it by making them feel guilty because they weren't militant enough, arranged for the dynamite, took a brother to pick it up, and then testified against them in court. The result was: they served 3 1/2 years, and Woods is still free. That is a fact, and you'd better read about the Statue of Liberty case before you go out every night talking about the revolution with anyone and everyone.

The second thing deals with these research programs. I have been gathering some intelligence on them, and I have discovered in one city, Detroit, that three researchers with some money talked to over 250 brothers who discussed details of the rebellion, plans and stages for future activity. The researchers have taken the material back to the foundation. What do you think they have done with it? Obviously, the Man has it. This has happened all over the country. Immediately, during, and after the rebellion you see brothers talking to television cameras, saying what they're going to do soon as the National Guard pulls out. They are just selling wolf tickets and giving out information on themselves. The Man has an intelligence file on everybody. And he has gotten that information in part because we have been running off at the mouth, co-operating with some research project about a rebellion. You don't make a rebellion and describe it until after it's all over.

The third question deals with rumor mongering. For the last two or three weeks I've gotten telephone calls from people saying that this person or that person is "the Man," and when I check it out there doesn't seem to be much basis in fact for the kinds of rumors that are spreading. Such evidence as "This chick looks funny," or "She talks funny." I am not saying that there are no informers. There are enough FBI and CIA agents, even in this room, that we don't know about. We do not need to make the situation worse by spreading rumors that have no foundation based on facts and reality. One must check out these things before fingering a person.

What is the danger of rumor-spreading? The danger is that the Man uses this as a divisive technique. He puts the finger on cats. He wants to create suspicion, he wants to divide and conquer, he wants to put the finger on cats by spreading ill-founded rumors. This has happened all over Africa. Liberation fighters have had to combat suspicions placed on them by the fingers of the Man. And if we give in to this type of rumor-mongering, we are contributing to that type of activity.

The fourth thing is the negative press which we've talked about. We cannot expect favorable coverage of our activities. We must have our own papers.

The fifth thing which is extremely important deals with splitting activities. As Brother Snelling said, "Everybody's black." Blackness is granted. It may not be sufficient, but certainly it is granted. But the reality is that the Man is wearing Afros today, he's wearing dashikis. You dig it? He's wearing them. I've seen them in the crowds. When we were in Philadelphia on the so-called dynamite frame-up case, a cop, whom we were suspicious of and had not seen for three weeks, came around in a dashiki and a turban identifying with the masses. The brothers easily identify with me because I'm wearing a buba, the other brother is over there clean and taking care of business. See, we're in a trick. We have to watch out for this kind of activity because it's happening all over. That is why the Man has so much intelligence in Harlem, because he has gone in there on that kind of basis and he's doing it everywhere else and we have to watch out.

The kidnapping in Washington was supposed to have happened because the brother wasn't black enough, and some of the same people involved in the kidnapping put out a newsletter charging that there was an internal Communist conspiracy to kill black people at the demonstration at the pentagon. It was admitted in the newsletter that there had been conversations with the Police Department, admitted there had been discussions about how this organization could keep down a rebellion in D.C. Also, in the newsletter, there were words to the effect that Robert Williams, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown were associating with governments that would bring greater repression on black people in the United States. And yet, this organization called itself the Black Man's Volunteer Liberation Army. I am not even saying that those who put out that newsletter were the Man. Maybe they didn't put it out, but they didn't disown it. It is obvious however, that the effect was the same. The black community in Washington was terrorized. They did not know what was going to happen that day. Certainly they did not want to be involved in gunfights between blacks. When we fight like this among ourselves, only the Many stands to gain. He got his peace and quiet in Washington at our expense. Black people were split, and we must realize that blackness is going to be used more and more as a splitting tactic.

Remember, this government will use any means to control the upsurge of insurrectional activity coming from the Inner City, and we must not help him. This happened here at this conference. They had said they were going to do that. But they were stopped. When we have to fight among ourselves we don't have time to deal with the Man. We just do not have the time to fight among ourselves. The masses get bewildered and they are not willing to go out on the streets if they feel they have to fight with brothers. It is difficult enough to get any of us out on the streets.

It's bad enough to have to deal with a hunky. Nobody wants to shoot a brother. In Washington the people who went to see about the newsletter and other matters did not want to shoot those cats. As a matter of fact, it is my contention that the Man was waiting for them to start something.

There is not better help we can give to the Man than to fight among ourselves. In Washington, it was a perfect set-up. If the brothers had mounted the stairs to take care of business, they could easily have been blown away.

So, we must understand, Brothers and Sisters, that this is going to happen time and time again. Situations in which we will be unnecessarily provoked will occur.

Brothers and Sisters, I am going to close. But I want to emphasize that we have brought a lot of information in papers to this conference and we urge you to go back to your campuses and get this material distributed. Get your student activities office to stencil this material and you can pass it out. Do you realize that most books don't sell over 100,000 copies? When we mimeograph 50,000 copies of something we are beating Random House. What difference does it make if it is not copyrighted? We must get out of this Western value that something has to be copyrighted and printed by one of the New York publishing houses before it has value.

The point is that we want the material read. Now you are hip enough to get all of these Afro-American organizations started on your campuses. And I know not many of you on the West Coast go to all-black schools. There aren't many. So you ought to be hip enough to get those mimeograph machines rolling and copy this material. If you do this we can have a distribution of 100,000 copies of the material printed and distributed in a month. We talk about alternative methods of communication. Well, we can do something with this material. If you don't like it, give it to somebody else to read and ask him to mimeograph it.

It is imperative that we do this, but to do it we have got to work. I am old and I know that, but I also know that most cats are shucking and jiving. They simply do not want to do any work. They do not want to do any work. They want to sit down and talk about how black I am and how bad the Man is, but they will not even get up and raise a quarter for a black organization.

Now, I ain't going into no cultural-historical analysis of that. It ain't nothing but out-and-out laziness.

Finally, we must be concerned about the future. It is a trap to think in terms of our lives. Do you think that if those North Vietnamese soldiers were worried about their lives they would put up the fight they do at Dak To Hill? If you are worried about your life it means that you are trying to protect your life. And if you are too worried, you are expressing again individualism. You are not concerned with the future. When you are not worried about your life and you are concerned about the future, about all the unborn Huey Newtons, all the unborn Emmett Tills and Charles Mack Parkers and Sammy Younges and Ruby Doris Robinsons, and when you are concerned about your own children -- then you are ready to take care of business. And you ain't got no business having any children if you ain't gonna fight for their freedom.

Thank You.

(end)

AFTERWORDS

Notes on the Transition of the "Black Liberation"
Phrase, Concept, and Movement

By Mwalimu Shanna and Seldom Seen

"...In every process an internally necessary negation of quality is brought into being by the development and strengthening of that process. The more fully and far a given quality has been developed and the higher the stage of quantitative development it has reached, the more clearly are its final limits revealed, the more quickly does its negation, does its transition to a new quality, draw near."

(1)

A. To Re-Build, Preserve, and Pass On

It wasn't hard to convince ourselves that James Forman's speech was relevant to the present circumstances of our people, or that reprinting it would shed light on the theoretical and practical tasks of revolutionary New Afrikan cadres.

Each of us have children and young adults in our families who know (or knew) little or nothing about people like James Forman, Fannie Lou Hamer, Monroe Trotter, and a list of others.

Each of us knows young adults who've never seen pictures of Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, and a list of others.

Each of us have been asked questions regarding the deeds of individuals and organizations, the failures and accomplishments of previous stages of struggle, which further confirm the need to use the past as a weapon of struggle.

As We discussed the pros and cons of reprinting the speech, the idea of offering our own perspective on some of its themes seemed to arise as a natural consequence, because the themes find expression in the conditions and the organizational tasks confronting New Afrikan people in 1985 -- and beyond.

The themes find contemporary expression because the historical contradictions that give rise to them have not been resolved. The resolution of these contradictions will involve a prolonged effort to raise the consciousness of New Afrikan people and to organize People's War; prolonged efforts to clarify and popularize the lessons of previous experiences.

Forman's speech, and the struggles that inspired it, contain lessons yet to be drawn. We must draw the lessons, preserve them, pass them on. We must apply the lessons in ways that help us acquire a needed **new** interpretation of our past experiences, so that We can have a better grasp of present conditions, and be more effective in launching a new national revolutionary offensive.

As We indicated earlier, We offer these Notes as examples of some of the questions Forman's speech raised for us, and share with you a few of the initial answers to those questions. This is not a one-shot deal. We feel that these questions will be with us for a while to come -- the sooner more of us deal extensively with them, both in terms of theory and in terms of testing and applying our thoughts in practice among our people, the sooner will We be able to leave some of these questions behind and move on to others. "Study and Struggle" is definitely what's happening here. There?

A.1. New Afrikan Youth, and Historical Discontinuity

Forman opened his speech by referring to what We call "historical discontinuity." As he described it: "Too often we look at an event, a situation, a slogan, a life history, a rebellion, a revolution...and assume that its present characteristics have always been its past."

Historical discontinuity is both a theoretical and a practical political and organizational problem. No matter what immediate, concrete tasks one is engaged in, in no matter what area of struggle or life situation, one confronts such questions as "what," "how," and "why" to organize, or to persuade. These questions are interrelated and inform each other. Each question is also related to "history" and its proper interpretation.

By "historical discontinuity," We mean an interrupted, disjointed presentation and acquisition of factual knowledge regarding the social development (i.e., "history") of the Nation, and the improper interpretation of such knowledge.

Historical continuity, on the other hand, implies an uninterrupted presentation and acquisition of the knowledge regarding our social development, and a particular, "correct" interpretation of all facts. Historical continuity also implies the existence and uninterrupted functioning of the structural means used to interpret, present, pass on this knowledge to present and future generations.

The "correct" interpretation of our story is one that is consistent with a **New Afrikan** ideology, grounded in dialectical materialist philosophy, and with the political and economic interests of a nation, dominated by imperialism and seeking its independence and the development of a socialist society.

Historical discontinuity manifests itself in numerous ways (i.e., the examples cited by Forman; the terms We use or fail to use in identifying our nationality; the failure to grasp and express the existence of the New Afrikan nation), and it results from a number of causes that are both internal and external.

However, We're most concerned with those causes that are based inside the Nation and the national revolutionary movement. We don't deny the existence and the need to address the circumstances of our national subjugation that have strongly influenced the presence and character of New Afrikan historical discontinuity (i.e., the external influence of intellectual and structural measures taken by amerikkkan settler-imperialism). But, We understand and act on the primacy of our own responsibility for the existence of historical discontinuity, and for the elimination of the phenomenon and its internal causes.

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The presentation of Forman's speech and the organization of the Conference to which he was invited, appear to have taken place within a context of concern for youth on the part of militant and revolutionary forces. One would not be out of place to question whether a similar concern is held by contemporary New Afrikan revolutionary forces -- on a scale demanded by the harsh and worsening conditions confronting our youth, and the overall responsibilities and tasks of vanguard forces.

Many of us who came of age in the 1950s and 1960s tend not to realize that the meaning of those years is largely lost to and for sizeable segments of New Afrikan youth and the masses. To the extent that many of our youth do consider these years, they look upon them as "ancient history" -- seemingly unconnected and irrelevant to their present circumstances, needs, and aspirations. And, those who have a greater sense of the connections and relevance of the past to the present, are hard put to find (or rather, to be found by) the sources that will provide an interpretation of the past that's consistent with the nationalist revolutionary tradition, and with the practical efforts to build revolutionary institutions and organizations; to re-build the national revolutionary movement; and to realize the independence and socialist development of the Nation.

Taken as a whole, today's New Afrikan youth tend to view the present not as a low tide in the centuries-old struggle to regain our independence. Instead, they consider the present as an accomplished goal of a struggle against racism and for "equality" in the mainstream of amerikkkan settler-imperialism. (2)

New Afrikan people -- but especially our youth -- have no meaningful sense of the continuity of the Nation's social and revolutionary development. Those of us with the responsibility to inspire and direct such development have been negligent. We have failed to build, preserve, and to pass on a **Movement** that provides a militant, patriotic (New Afrikan) framework from which our children would acquire the proper understanding of prior contributions and stages of struggle. There simply can be no independence and socialism without such understanding.

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"And it is among the masses that our youth may work." These words were spoken during a high tide of struggle by New Afrikan people "against the system." The tide is not now high, and many of our people no longer consider themselves to be engaged in struggle "against the system."

Years ago it was common to hear that "repression breeds resistance," and many of us depended on the conditions of repression to do our work for us. The level of resistance declined in the face of increasing repression, showing not only the difference between resistance and national revolution, but showing also the importance of well thought-out and systematic work among the masses, altering in its forms as repression intensifies.

Just as in 1967, there is a present need to work among the youth of our nation, as well as all other sectors of the masses. But, as We learn from the experiences of the 60s, and as We get a better grasp of our properly interpreted total story, We see that the present and future implications, styles, and methods of mass work must conform to "the nature of the struggle," the "character of the movement," and the "scope of the vanguard's practice." (3)

The New Afrikan independence movement must demonstrate that the problems and future of our youth is one of its priorities. We must work to claim the curiosity, imagination and attention of our youth. We must begin to provide national revolutionary outlets for their energy, creativity, and intelligence, with programs that are inspired by their most immediate needs and interests. (By "programs," We don't mean only periodic conferences, workshops, or gala events that spend themselves in the span of a day, week, or month. We mean programs that come "from the masses, to the masses," and that operate on a daily basis, year in and year out, from one generation to the next.)

A section of the **New Afrikan Creed** refers to our being "a light on a hill," and in many respects this is where the movement sits in its relation to the daily lives of the masses. But the masses live in the valley, and the light on a hill is too far away to be seen and to have meaningful effect on their lives. New Afrikan leaders and cadres must leave the hill and go to the homes, the schools, the neighborhoods and workplaces of the people.

Our particular emphasis on the need to **Go To** and work among our youth is based on their potential capacity as a national revolutionary force; their relation to the social and material reality of the Nation, its survival, and its developmental needs; the general social ("humanist") principles of New Afrikan philosophy -- revolutionary, scientific, and socialist.

New Afrikan youth are the social basis of the nation's future. They must be reached by the movement, and aided, so that they can better assume their duties as responsible citizens of a nation struggling to liberate itself and "To build a New [Socialist] Society that is better than what We now know and as perfect as We can make it." (4)

Our youth won't be reached and so aided, and will probably come up short in the fulfillment of their responsibilities, if New Afrikan leadership and cadres don't fulfill our responsibilities to them.

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Those of us who lived through and participated in the struggles of previous decades, too easily forget -- and regard too lightly -- that as We came of age, historical discontinuity and absence of national revolutionary consciousness was also characteristic of our generations.

This was so, in large part, because previous generations had -- for whatever reason - - failed to build, preserve, and pass on **National...Revolutionary** institutions and party formations, ideas and information, regarding their experiences. They had also failed to pass on **their** interpretation of these experiences, and the conceptual tools that they had acquired, used, and further developed.

This failure has, up to now, been effectively repeated by the present generation of conscious New Afrikan leadership and cadres.

Historical discontinuity, absence of national revolutionary consciousness, and lack of institutionalized revolutionary structures -- in sufficient number and quality, and effecting the lives of our people in all spheres, on a daily basis -- remain much too characteristic of the Nation and the New Afrikan Independence Movement, as each succeeding generation comes of age.

The shortcomings of all previous generations of New Afrikan activists have included the failure to create an **Independent New Afrikan Revolutionary Scientific Socialist Ideology**, developed on the basis of a consistent application of the dialectical materialist outlook and method to our peculiar process of social development, i.e., the reality of the national oppression of New Afrika by the u.s. settler-imperialist state.

As each new generation has come of age and begun to actively participate in the national revolutionary process, they have had to begin practically from scratch.

Each attempt at a new beginning consumes precious time, and results in sacrifices and mistakes that would otherwise not occur, had previous movements not suffered these ideological and political deficiencies.

Such failure has contributed in no small way to the persistent internal weaknesses of New Afrikan organizations and movements of the past and of the present. Because they start with these deficiencies, the quantitative and qualitative character of the struggle and each new movement never reaches full potential. This accounts, in great measure, for the relatively short duration of high tides of struggle, and for the extended periods of low tides (like the present).

While We admit that each new national revolutionary thrust has a relatively richer content than the preceding one, this is due less to the development of subjective factors (i.e., internal ideological, political and organizational developments), than to the development of objective contradictions and their influence on the content and quality of our thought and practice.

A. 2. National Liberation Revolution, and Counter-Revolution

"What we were doing 20 years ago has come full circle...
We've got to go back and start all over again. But this
time...the mandate is not just a little bit of social change,
but a complete revolution. That is what has to happen now.
And it won't happen overnight." (5)

Conceptual and organizational questions are at the center of the processes of generating conscious revolutionary -- and counter-revolutionary -- movements. Forman's "Black Liberation" addressed several such questions, and they proved not only to be intimately related to the decline of national revolutionary struggle in the 1960s and 1970s,

but to previous stages of struggle as well. Nearly all those questions remain with us, and they are largely unanswered.

Forman's speech was delivered during one of the most decisive stages of the New Afrikan national revolutionary struggle -- a stage both like and unlike previous ones.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, We witnessed a high tide of militant activity by the New Afrikan masses, in which they employed a combination of political, economic, socio-cultural, and armed forms of struggle. This activity emerged with distinct anti-amerikkkan, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist aspects; it had a distinguished pro-independence, pro-socialist, and pro-internationalist orientation. It represented a continuation of long-established traditions of struggle in these spheres.

The high tide of struggle in the 60s and 70s emerged and declined -- as did previous stages -- as a result of objective and subjective factors. Objective conditions of political, economic, and social life sharpened our awareness of repression, and eroded all inhibitions that had previously kept us from confronting -- in whatever form -- the u.s. government.

Subjectively, the activity of the masses and their vanguard forces helped to inspire the confrontation, direct it, and encouraged its evolution from protest against racism to eventual people's war for independence and socialism.

The decline of the high tide was primarily a result of the relative weakness of the vanguard New Afrikan forces, together with the counter-revolutionary initiative undertaken by the u.s. settler-imperialist state, in league with the nation's neocolonialist elements.

Like previous high tides of struggle, New Afrikan vanguard forces had become isolated from the masses physically, and had largely abandoned the stand of the masses ideologically.

The national revolutionary tradition cannot escape the law of contradiction, or the presence of internal weaknesses -- what Amilcar Cabral refers to as "ideological deficiencies."

One such deficiency was manifested in the position that the struggle was against racism. It was also reflected in the line, "black nationalism is a response or reaction to white racism" -- a way of saying that if whites would abandon racism, New Afrikans would 'naturally' have no basis for, and would abandon the pursuit of, national independence.

Philosophically, these positions demonstrate a metaphysical-mechanical approach to the problem of explaining New Afrikan social (national) development. That is, it explains the existence and motion of the Nation as being initially caused and determined by external forces (i.e., "racism," or the actions of the slavers, settlers, etc.).

Ideologically, these positions try to undermine and liquidate the national reality, and impose an integrationist, neocolonial perspective upon the masses.

The national reality of New Afrika is not a creation of u.s. settler-imperialist racism. It's an inevitable and necessary continuity of development of the existing cultures and states on the African continent and from which We were kidnapped. The New Afrikan nation is a creation of the distortion of these continental African cultures and states, caused by imperialist domination and exploitation, which used "racism" as a rationalization. To struggle against racism is to struggle against a mere "shadow" of the real enemy:

We have to combat the causes of racism. If a bandit comes in my house and I have a gun I can not shoot the shadow of this bandit. I have to shoot the bandit. Many people lose energy and effort, and make sacrifices combating shadows. We have to combat the material reality that produces the shadow. (6)

The failure to sufficiently reach such an understanding of racism was a factor in the failure of the last high tide of struggle. The internal weaknesses of national revolutionary

forces in this regard, and the actions of neocolonialist forces to prevent the heightened development of consciousness and struggle, remains evident in contemporary struggles, such as around "affirmative action," where the emphasis continues to be on "racism" rather than on national oppression.

Another expression of our ideological deficiency was touched on in Forman's speech, where he mentions a distinction between "resistance" and "revolution," but fails to elaborate on it. That failure to elaborate reflects the failure by the entire movement of the time, to recognize the importance and implications of the distinction, and to further develop its ideo-theoretical formulation, and then direct the practical political and organizational activities of the struggle on its basis.

Forman states, "It is absolutely essential to see our history as one of resistance." At first glance, "resistance" and "revolution" (national) appear to be interchangeable terms, especially when Forman also says, "To view our history as one of resistance is to recognize more clearly the colonial relationship that we have with the United States." But, if our relation to the u.s. is colonial, then it is **National**; and, if it is a relationship between an oppressed and oppressor nation, in the imperialist era, then our "history" is not merely identified by the act of resistance, but by the process of **social** as well as **national revolution** (i.e., national liberation revolution seeks the destruction of existing relations of (imperialist) production, conquest of state power (independence), and the creation of new relations of production (socialist). Nations can carry on "resistance" struggles without at the same time consciously pursuing social revolution.

The concept "resistance," (in general, and without any qualifying attributes) implies no more than mere confrontation, i.e., the actions of a nation to check encroachments by (external) aggressors upon their territory (or defined interests) -- without implying a need or intent to change the fundamental economic, political and social order of the resisting nation, either in the process of resisting, or after the aggression has been checked. They "resist" encroachments only to return to the state of things as they existed prior to the encroachments.

We can begin to qualify the term and concept "resistance" as they relate to New Afrikans and to other peoples subject to imperialist domination. That is, our "former state" can be said to be one of national independence -- but an independence not only with its own developing internal contradictions, but also one existing before the development of (european) capitalism and world imperialism. The only way to "resist" a colonial relationship is by regaining national independence; and, the only way to "resist" capitalism and imperialism is by having the nation wage an internal **social** revolution as well as a national independence struggle, and pursue the development of socialism as an integral part of the national liberation process -- hence the phrase and concept, New Afrikan National Liberation Revolution.

Also, as in the previous stages of struggle, We witnessed, during the 60s and 70s, the initiation of complex and sophisticated forms of repression and counter-revolution. This reaction by the u.e. empire resulted in, among other things, new structural and ideological forms of neocolonialist oppression. Most of the policies and programs initiated in the 1960s to diffuse and divert New Afrikan revolutionary potential, remain in place in the 1980s.

Most dictionaries will tell you that the word "repress" means: To check; curb; to subdue or put down by force; to prevent the natural or normal expression, activity, or development of; to exclude from consciousness. And, for the word "repression," most dictionaries will say: A process by which unacceptable desires or impulses are excluded from consciousness and left to operate in the unconscious.

We cite these definitions to help draw the distinction between "repression" and "counter-revolution," as well as to draw the parallels between these words and concepts, to those of "resistance" and "revolution."

The reaction of the u.s. empire toward the motion of New Afrikan people in the 60s and 70s wasn't mere "repression," because the empire knew it couldn't content itself with merely 'leaving desires and impulses to operate on the unconscious level.' If the motion of the masses had only been oriented toward "resistance," then mere repression would have served the purposes of the empire.

New Afrikan vanguard and mass forces sought to unfold national revolutionary change and development, in all spheres of life, and among all classes, groups, and strata of the Nation. Consequently, the empire responded not only with physical force, but with counter-revolutionary reforms in all spheres of life, among the entire New Afrikan population.

They instituted reforms in the welfare system, the educational system, the criminal justice system, and in the political and economic arenas on all levels.

The generally narrow perspective of the old movement prevented our grasp of the total character of the empire's reaction -- its "wave of repression" -- and also prevented us from focusing on a broader range of spheres of struggle in which We were -- and remain -- weak and ineffective.

What do We mean? New Afrikan people were "taking it to the streets" in the opening years of the 60s -- and the more the empire struck back, not only with armed forms or counter-intelligence activity, but with such things as the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and "community action programs," and the Voting Rights Act. Imperialist and neocolonialist positions regarding these and similar responses to national revolutionary initiative, tend to credit them to "good massa Kennedy," but they were inspired by the growing revolutionary movement of the New Afrikan masses. And, they were designed to diffuse and divert that movement -- and they did.

From the sit-ins of the late 50s to the assassination of Malcolm in 1965, the momentum and conscious orientation of the masses and their vanguard forces was toward what We would call today "parallel structures." We understand the causes and operation of such structures better when We look at their existence in other countries, and study the process of their formation by other national liberation movements. In such situations, We usually see the existence of "liberated territory," upon which the people establish "parallel" economic, political, military, educational, and other embryonic national institutions and government structures.

The "liberated territory" in New Afrikan/amerikkka in the 1960s was the space We occupied, primarily in the cities. We had begun to talk about control of the schools, the police, the politics, and the economics of our communities. We were talking about the need to control some space, some land of our own. We were moving toward the concepts and practical efforts to liberate some territory and begin to build "parallel structures" for a nation struggling to liberate itself.

But there were internal weaknesses, and there was the response of the empire. The empire's call for a "war on poverty" was in fact a strategic move in their war against the nation. Their creation of programs in the economic, political, educational, "criminal justice," and socio-cultural spheres were designed to turn the masses from the national revolutionary orientation and the creation of bases of power created and controlled by the New Afrikan masses.

The key to the empire's strategy was to propose that the people "participate" in running the poverty programs and others, while channeling their energies into "safe" areas that wouldn't present challenges to the structures and ideological tenets of u.s. imperialism and an ever-developing New Afrikan neocolonialist cadre. By the mid-60s, the empire removed the facade, and eliminated all semblance of "people's participation" in the war on "poverty."

Malcolm's explanation of how the empire and neocolonialist forces subverted the 1963 "March on Washington" is also a good description of the short period 1960-64. But the revolutionary motion of the masses couldn't be so easily repressed, and between 1964 and

1967 it found other channels of expression, many of which took armed forms in what the empires termed "riots."

The year 1967 marks the stage at which the empire initiated more developed and extensive counter-revolutionary initiatives, building largely on the experiences and lessons of the previous years.

The mass rebellions between 1964 and 1967 inspired, among other things, the creation of what came to be called the Kerner Commission. (We've seen the creation of similar commissions, in other places where colonized masses have revolted and forced imperialism to initiate neocolonialist forms -- but We seldom draw the analogy to ourselves.)

The Kerner Commission was established to study the "urban riots" of New Afrikans, and to determine their cause (!) and to suggest "appropriate responses" so that such rebellions would be prevented in the future. The Report issued by the Commission is one place that study should begin on the counter-revolutionary initiative of the late 60s. Again, that initiative wasn't confined to the military-police sphere, and policies and programs that arose from that Report and stage, contributed to the decline of the high tide of mass revolutionary struggle, and continue to influence the contemporary low tide and any efforts that We'd make to reverse it. (The "research programs" that Forman mentions in his speech was part of the work of the Kerner Commission.)

(In 1968, Daniel P. Moynihan sent his "benign neglect" Memo to Richard Nixon, urging the adoption of policies that would bring about the dissolution of the "lower class strata" that had figured so prominently in the rebellions throughout amerikkka. In 1970, Moynihan proposed the isolation of the growing "armed front" from the masses, using methods such as the "criminalization" of their image, the improvements of police methods, and the creation of a buffer by increasing the dissolution of the lower class and pushing the growing middle class as a model.)

Just as the Kerner Report was a primary tool in 1967, the Task Force on Law and Law Enforcement of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence was a primary tool of counter-revolution in 1970.

Where the Kerner Commission had its focus on the masses and "urban riots," the focus of this Commission and Task Force was the Black Liberation Army and the Weather Underground, and what they described as "the small but increasing number of 'radical black militants', who 'actively espouse and sometimes practice illegal retaliatory and even guerrilla warfare tactics against existing social institutions, particularly the police and the schools.'"

The Task Force held that the "purposeful violence" of these forces was "potentially even more destructive than the urban riots have been." The Task Force was concerned with "stopping the spread" of the influence of this tendency, and understood that they first had to understand it, and its causes.

Both the Kerner Commission and the Task Force are particular examples of what was happening with the entire u.s. government and **ALL** its public and private institutions as they initiated counter-revolution against the revolutionary thrust of the New Afrikan masses and their vanguard forces.

The u.s. government took the national revolutionary orientation of slogans such as "community control," "Black Power," and "Black Liberation," and gradually turned them into their opposites -- largely by adding impetus to the already existing reformist-neocolonialist orientation of these slogans, which merely reflected the existence and struggle between these tendencies, inside the Nation.

We hope that while brief, We've made the point: At the heart of both revolution and counter-revolution are conceptual and organizational questions. The enemy proved stronger and more efficient in developing and implementing the concepts that guided their pacification programs, than We were in developing and implementing the concepts that must guide People's War.

The enemy went to the people, seeking to "dry up the sea," to "win hearts and minds," to give the impression of satisfying the material needs of the masses; to make the masses feel that they had an interest in -- and that they could participate in shaping -- the future of amerikkka, as opposed to the future of a separate, independent, and socialist New Afrika.

Going **TO** the people for the enemy was easier because WE weren't there. The facade of satisfying the needs of the masses was a simple trick, because We weren't providing examples of how the people could do it for themselves. Creating programs that feigned "people's participation and control" was easier for the enemy because We hadn't helped the people create their own programs.

As in the 1960s, the 1970s, so in the 1980s?

A. 3. An Exemplary (Point of) Reference: The "New Negro Movement," and The African Blood Brotherhood

The past holds answers to many contemporary questions. At the very least, reference to the past will allow us to see that many of these questions are not as unique as we tend to believe. Many of the problems facing us today were also confronted by New Afrikans in the 1920s; New Afrikans in those years encountered essentially the same problems that had engaged earlier generations. It could hardly be otherwise, since the fundamental problem confronting New Afrikans of each generation has been the lack of national independence. This is the essence of all our problems, in all spheres of life.

The fundamental contradiction in the process of development of a thing and the essence of the process determined by this fundamental contradiction will not disappear until the process is completed; but in a lengthy process the conditions usually differ at each stage. The reason is that, although the nature of the fundamental contradiction in the process of development of a thing and the essence of the process remain unchanged, the fundamental contradiction becomes more and more intensified as it passes from one stage to another in the lengthy process. In addition, among the numerous major and minor contradictions which are determined or influenced by the fundamental contradiction, some become intensified, some are temporarily or partially resolved or mitigated, and some new ones emerge; hence the process is marked by stages. If people do not pay attention to the stages in the process of development of a thing, they cannot deal with its contradictions properly. (7)

Each generation confronts the fundamental problem of national oppression in forms that take shape on the basis of the particular objective and subjective conditions of their time. Each generation will build (or fail to build) organizations suited to the nature of the fundamental problem, and the particular conditions of their time.

Each generation formulates phrases that give shape to the concepts that arise on the basis of the fundamental problem and particular conditions. These phrases are usually mere adaptations of earlier ones, and the formulation or interpretation of each generation's concepts are also based on the concepts of our elders. No matter what new forms they assume, the concepts -- and the phrases that become their practical expression -- remain essentially the same. It will be so until the Nation regains its independence and begins to build a socialist society.

We make this brief referential departure with misgivings (and promise to return to the subject in the near future), because we won't be able to treat it with the detailed and thorough description and analysis that it requires at this stage of our struggle. Nevertheless, we make the departure because it will highlight points that run throughout the themes of these Notes.

We begin with reference to the "New Negro Movement." Even a brief outline of this movement will help us draw useful lessons and a clearer understanding of the transition of the "black liberation" movement.

Like the "BLM," the "new negro" movement began as a radical departure from the theory and practice of "established" forces who sought "freedom, justice, and equality," within the amerikkkan system. The movement began to take shape around 1915-1917. It began with a revolutionary orientation, on the stand of the masses; it entered its own

transition in the mid-1920s. By the 1930s, its revolutionary orientation had been subordinated by a reactionary one.

We often speak of "the new superseding the old." The supersession of the old by the new is a general, eternal and inviolable law of the universe. The transformation of one thing into another, through leaps of different forms in accordance with its essence and external conditions -- this is the process of the new superseding the old. In each thing there is contradiction between its new and its old aspects, and this gives rise to a series of struggles with many twists and turns. As a result of these struggles, the new aspect changes from being minor to being major and rises to predominance, while the old aspect changes from being major to being minor and gradually dies out. And the moment the new aspect gains dominance over the old, the old thing changes qualitatively into a new thing. It can thus be seen that the nature of a thing is mainly determined by the principal aspect of the contradiction, the aspect which has gained predominance. When the principal aspect which has gained predominance changes, the nature of a thing changes accordingly. (8)

The "new negro" movement was inspired by developments outside and inside the Nation. The u.s. was involved in the imperialist initiative known as "world war one"; hundreds of thousands of New Afrikan refugees were fleeing the National Territory for points North and West inside the settler-empire.

These refugees were fleeing the growing terrorism of the Southern settlers, and a worsening economic situation. The imperialist war helped create conditions that opened jobs for New Afrikans in the North and West. But the "promised land" also offered its own brand of colonial violence, as the "Red Summer" of 1919 was to dramatically demonstrate, i.e., most of the "race riots" of that year occurred in Northern and border states.

As New Afrikans fled the National Territory for sections of the empire North, their numbers and proportions in cities increased; the number of New Afrikans engaged in agriculture was gradually overcome by the number of those engaged in industrial and service occupations. The process of class differentiation inside the Nation was accelerated. All elements of neocolonial form of New Afrikan oppression and exploitation were developed to a higher level.

The key here is to interpret this and all other stages of our development not with the phrases and terms then in use -- which are not only essentially bourgeois-imperialist, but also issue from a development of the national revolutionary trend that was much lower than our present one. We must use the lessons and knowledge gained from accumulated experiences, the further development of revolutionary science and the ideo-theories of national liberation struggles, as We re-view the past.

In 1917, revolution and counter-revolution, colonialism and anti-colonialism were the order of the day. The u.s. and other world capitalist forces were transforming "free enterprise" capital into monopoly capital (imperialism), and consolidating new positions. These struggles and transformations had a dialectical influence on the development of New Afrika and all other nations dominated by imperialism. The development of New Afrika at this stage --as at all other stages-- necessarily had two aspects, two tendencies or trends: one, national and revolutionary; the other, bourgeois and neo-colonialist.

The "New Negro Movement" was but part of the broad, national revolutionary trend of the masses, with its own internal contradictions. It was given articulation and organizational form by (revolutionary) petty-bourgeois forces of all political persuasions.

These forces included, initially, A. Phillip Randolph and Chandler Owen; Hubert Harrison and W.A. Domingo; Cyril Briggs, Grace Campbell, and Richard B. Moore; Marcus Garvey. Most of these were members of, or sympathized with, the amerikkan Socialist Party.

These bloods and others were generally considered the "vanguard" of a movement that opposed the theory and practice of such "old negroes" as W.E.B. DuBois, James Weldon Johnson, Kelly Miller, Robert Moton, and others.

One of the issues that initially distinguished the "new negroes" from the "old negroes," was amerikkka's involvement in the imperialist war, New Afrikan support of the war, and the conscription of New Afrikans into the u.s. armed forces. As a movement, the "new negroes" opposed the war, while the "old negroes" supported it and encouraged the participation of New Afrikans in the u.s. armed forces.

It should be pointed out that A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen gave an early indication of the movements internal contradictions and the direction they would take a few years later, when they broke ranks with the rest of the movement and came out in support of the war.

In the November, 1917 issue of The Messenger (the magazine of Randolph and Owen), they said, "Making the world safe for democracy is a big task. But since the President has announced the purpose of the war, we are willing to do our part." (9)

Both the "old" and "new" trends sought to establish and/or maintain leadership of the masses -- in name, if not in fact. The "new negroes" did demonstrate more of a mass orientation, and concentrated their activities among workers, seeking independent New Afrikan unionization. They articulated options for the solution of the masses' daily suffering that were outside those sanctioned by settler-imperialism. They advocated armed self-defense by New Afrikans against the attacks of amerikkan settlers; promoted a nationally-oriented "race awareness"; they looked upon the amerikkan police as "mobs," the amerikkan courts as places where New Afrikans could only expect to be lynched "with the rope of justice," and concluded that New Afrikans had either "to successfully hide, or fight and die."

The "new negroes" also sought the organization of mass-based co-operative economic ventures; participated in electoral politics by supporting the candidates of the oppressor nation Socialist Party and opposed the capitalist parties.

On the other had, the "old negroes" were oriented toward the rising (reactionary) petty-bourgeoisie; proposed options inside the u.s. system; were non-violent; proposed an integrationist "race awareness"; were pro-capitalist; supported u.s. law; supported the capitalist political parties; encouraged the development of capitalist-oriented small businesses and "free enterprise."

Neither the "new negroes" nor the "old negroes" formed homogeneous blocs. The "new negro movement" was composed of bloods of many political persuasions, and found common ground in what We might call their stand of "resistance" versus the "accomodationist" stand of the "old negroes." As already indicated, A. Philip Randolph was still considered part of the vanguard of the movement even after he came out in support of the imperialist war -- an early indication of "the new superseding the old."

The "new negroes" were nearly all "socialists," in orientation. The movement -- especially the "vanguard" forces -- experienced their first split, and provided more evidence of "the new superseding the old" -- when the european and amerikkan socialist-communist parties split in 1919. Randolph, Owen and others sided with the Second (Democratic Socialist) International, while Briggs, Campbell, Moore and others, sided with those who came to constitute the settler-amerikkan Communist Party, and the (Third) Communist International.

The "new negroes" were "socialists" -- but not **New Afrikan** socialists. They joined or sympathized with the settler-oppressor nation Socialist Party despite its record of disinterest in, and opposition toward, the national reality of New Afrika and its interests.

These bloods established and maintained their relations with the SP not merely because "they were interested in the advocacy of socialism." (10) These relations were based on the bourgeois orientation of the "new radicals," who lacked faith in and bases among the New Afrikan masses. Lacking such faith and bases, they rationalized their relations with the SP by claiming the need for "allies." They further held the belief that New Afrikan independence wasn't possible without a preceding "revolutionary transformation in the whole of" amerikkka.

The implications of this line -- which We heard repeated in the 60s, the 70s and the 80s -- is like saying Algerian independence couldn't have been won without a revolution in France preceding it; or, that Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau were wrong to launch their movements and struggles without waiting on a 'revolutionary transformation in the whole of Portugal,' and similar nonsense, relative to other nationally oppressed peoples.

Aside from not being **New Afrikan** socialists, the "new negroes" were not "scientific" socialists. They "borrowed" their socialism from forces of *another nation*, and failed to "make concrete analysis of concrete conditions." The error was compounded by the fact these oppressor nation forces were left only in form, and right in essence.

The "new negro" movement was a "phenomenon in movement," and, "We know that the development of a phenomenon in movement, whatever its external appearance, depends mainly on its internal characteristics. We also know that on the political level our own reality -- however fine and attractive the reality of others may be -- can only be transformed by detailed knowledge of it, by our own efforts, by our own sacrifices...however identical our enemies, national liberation and social revolution are not exportable commodities; they are... the outcome of local and national elaboration, more or less influenced by external factors (be they favorable or unfavorable) but essentially determined and formed by the historical reality of each people, and carried to success by the overcoming or correct solution of the internal contradictions between the various categories characterizing this reality." (11)

Relying on settler-imperialist "left" allies and waiting on a revolution to occur inside the empire, is not how We determine the course of our struggle on the basis of our own reality and the working out of our internal contradictions.

Despite any objective relationship that may have existed between the Nation and the split in the european and amerikkkan socialist-communist parties and movements, the split in the "new negro movement" didn't occur as the result of the development of internal theories or debates relative to New Afrika's independence.

However, their split serves as an example of the "new superseding the old" on more than one level.

The 1919 split in the movement began to mark the distinctive transition in the roles of its revolutionary and reactionary aspects. It would be another five years before the reactionary aspect was heavily articulated (see Alain Locke's anthology, The New Negro). By the end of the 1920s, the transition of this movement would be more or less complete:

The New Negro label was gradually co-opted by that very middle class which by radical definition was "Old Negro." Blacks who denounced radicals of all stripes, commercialized the concept into a distinction between "new" aggressive individualists who capitalized on the social changes that came with the move to the city, and the lethargic Negro of the Old South. (12)

In other words, the external influence of the higher development of world imperialism and u.s. settler-empire, stimulated movement among the reactionary New Afrikan petty-bourgeoisie as well as movement among the revolutionary masses. The leadership of the "new negro movement" changed hands, its orientation shifted from

socialist to capitalist, from revolutionary nationalist to neocolonialist; from an emphasis on national self-determination, self-reliance, and the independent organization of the masses and workers, it began to emphasize alliances between the nation's reactionary forces and the forces of u.s. settler-imperialism.

It was a further development of the structural form of the nation's oppression, first appearing after the war between the Confederate States and the United States. Prior to 1865, the character of the nation's oppression was essentially colonial ("chattel slavery"), and after that point, it became neocolonial ("emancipation" -- a form of "formal political independence" unique to our conditions, but a process shared by all nations subject to imperialist domination and undergoing similar change from colonial to neocolonial subjugation).

Just as the "new negro" phrase, concept, and movement underwent a transition and was co-opted by bourgeois nationalist/neocolonialist forces, so too were phrases, concepts and movements labeled "black power" and "black liberation."

There were "nationalist" forces in the "new negro movement." But like the "socialists," these bloods didn't rely on their own reality as the basis for their definitions of themselves, where they wanted to go, and how they could best get there.

However, the 1919 split in the movement gave rise to a higher development in the ideo-theoretical and organizational expression of the national revolutionary trend, and planted the seeds of New Afrikan communism that present and future generations have yet to nurture and to harvest.

We now refer to the African Blood Brotherhood (and other misguided New Afrikans who joined the CPUSA or other oppressor nation organizations...most of whom thought they could or were maintaining a national revolutionary consciousness and commitment).

As with the admittedly brief reference to the "new negro movement," a review of the thought and practice of the ABB can shed light on desperately needed lessons to be used in our present efforts to rebuild a new movement and sustain the national revolutionary struggle -- lessons regarding how and why previous generations failed to build, preserve, and pass on national revolutionary, mass-based institutions, party formations, and a communist ideology that would be uniquely New Afrikan. We'll also get some indication as to how succeeding generations perpetuated these errors into the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.

The existence of revolutionary ideas within oppressed nations, and the existence of individuals and organizations inside these nations that articulate these ideas, presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class and presupposes the revolutionary orientation of the nation.

The African Blood Brotherhood's incipient move toward the development of a New Afrikan communist ideology and party was based on the nature of the contradiction between the nation and the u.s. empire in the imperialist era, and they were being pushed in that direction by the masses and the rising New Afrikan proletariat.

But, rather than build a national party, and develop an ideology and theory on the basis of the nation's reality and interests, they joined the party of another nation -- the oppressor nation CPUSA. They adopted policies and methods of "left" settler-imperialists which couldn't help but result in the dissolution of their organization, and the eventual liquidation of an embryonic theory for New Afrikan independence grounded in revolutionary scientific socialism.

One of the founders and key figures in the African Blood Brotherhood was Cyril Briggs. Briggs worked for the New York *Amsterdam News* as an editorial writer. He was fired in 1917 for writing editorials in opposition to the imperialist war.

In September, 1917, in one of the *Amsterdam News* editorials, Briggs proposed the establishment of a "colored autonomous state" in the western part of the empire (suggesting either Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, or Nevada. Briggs and the ABB maintained this position until 1919).

In 1918, Briggs also began to call for the establishment of such states in Africa and the Caribbean.

Still clinging to the belief that the precondition for New Afrikan independence was the "revolutionizing" of the entire empire, the ABB adopted, by the end of 1919, an essentially multi-national position. (13)

In 1919, Briggs, Grace Campbell, Richard Moore, and others, founded the African Blood Brotherhood (for African Liberation and Redemption). The ABB is noted for giving the nation's reality and the advocacy of national self-determination their first "coherent formulation and...organizational structure." (14)

The ABB was, in other another opinion, "in its day one of the most unusual Communist organizations in the world. It was nationalistic in an age in which Communists derided nationalism as a right-wing ideology. The Brotherhood developed independently from the worldwide Communist apparatus and remained independent for two years." (15)

The ABB was essentially a clandestine organization, with a membership estimated between three and five thousand. The membership was composed of 'class-conscious workers, revolutionary intellectuals, disillusioned Garveyites, and free agents.' It had a 'strong base among black building-tradesmen, plumbers, electricians, bricklayers, stockyard workers, and among the service trades.' One of its Post Commanders, Edward Doty, was also founder and key figure in the American Consolidated Trades Council, a federation of independent New Afrikan unions and groups in the building trades. (16)

The ABB Program -- and much of its practice -- emphasized higher wages for workers and their organization into independent unions; co-operatively owned, socialist oriented and mass-based businesses and industrial development; the creation of self-defense units and a Pan-African Army; the promotion of "race pride" and national consciousness; Pan-African solidarity and the creation of a "Universal Socialist Co-operative Commonwealth"; solidarity with oppressor nation anti-imperialist and revolutionary organizations; the organization of tenants associations, and struggles for cheaper rents; independent unionization of farmers and agricultural workers.

But again, the program was articulated shortly after the ABB was founded. Despite the degree of success they were having as they based their practice on it, other factors led them to abandon their own program, their own practice, and their own nation. By 1922, some ABB members had already joined the CPUSA, and the ABB had dropped much of its national revolutionary orientation:

The decline of the African Blood Brotherhood in the early twenties and its eventual demise coincided with the growing participation of its leadership in the activities of the Communist Party. By 1923-24, the Brotherhood had ceased to exist as an autonomous, organized expression of the national revolutionary trend. Its leading members became [amerikkkan] communists or close sympathizers and its Posts served as one of the Party's recruiting grounds for blacks. (17)

Harry Haywood talked to Cyril Briggs in the 1950s about the reasons for the ABB's decline, its absorption into the CPUSA, and its failure to continue the development of a program for the independence and socialist development of New Afrika. According to Haywood, Briggs looked back on the 1920s and concluded that, "The main reason for de-emphasizing the idea of black nationhood in the united states...was the unfavorable relationship of forces then existing." (18)

Haywood listed these forces as:

a) "Garvey...had preempted the leadership of the mass movement and corralled most of the militants."

b) (Garvey's) "hold over the masses was strengthened by the anti-Black violence of the Red Summer of 1919. This gave further credence to Garvey's contention that the u.s. was a

white man's country where blacks could never achieve equality. Indeed, for these masses, his program for a black state in Africa to which american blacks could migrate seemed far less utopian than the idea of a black state on u.s. soil."

c) "As for the South, Briggs did not feel that such a region of entrenched racism could be projected realistically as a territorial focus of a black nationalist state. It would not have been so accepted by the masses who were in flight from the area. For himself, he reasoned, the very idea of self-determination in the United States presupposed the support of white revolutionaries. That meant a revolutionary crisis in the country as a whole, and in that day no such prospect was in sight. In fact, white revolutionary forces were then small and weak, the target of the vicious anti-red drives of the government and employees."(19)

Haywood says that by the 1950s, Briggs had come to realize that the ABB had "underestimated the national element," been too impressed by oppressor nation leftists and **their** theory of socialism, and had been blinded by the belief in "multinational communist leadership."

We assume that most of our readers are familiar enough with the story of what happened to the ABB members and other New Afrikans who joined the CPUSA, not to need more details here. That story includes the development of the "Black Belt Nation Thesis," the activities of the CPUSA relative to the Nation, in the 1930s and 1940s. We definitely want to tell that story -- from our own perspective -- but it will have to be done in the near future.

How do We begin to draw lessons, useful in the present and future, from this limited reference to the short-lived African Blood Brotherhood?

We could begin with the same questions that Haywood put to Briggs: What were the reasons for the ABB's decline? What were the reasons for its failure to develop a theory and program for the liberation and socialist development of the Nation? Why did the ABB merge with the CPUSA?

When We first look at the answers given these questions by Briggs -- beginning with the "unfavorable relationship of forces" theme -- We immediately sense that the ABB was more concerned about external forces than internal ones, i.e., more concerned with amerikkka, than with New Afrika, and more concerned with oppressor nation leftists than with the masses of our own Nation.

They say they "had" to de-emphasize the idea of the nation because Garvey had the favor of the masses and cadres. **But Garvey had this favor precisely because he emphasized the National Element** -- the same national element that thirty years later Briggs said the ABB had "underestimated."

But why did they underestimate it in the 1920s? They did so in part because the amerikkkan Socialist and Communist parties did. They also underestimated the national element because they didn't fully understand it themselves.

On one hand, the ABB did the same thing that bloods in the 1960s and 70s did: they saw the advantages in adopting revolutionary scientific socialism, but they couldn't or wouldn't distinguish "socialism" from the oppressor nation socialist-communist parties, and the particular formation given socialism by these parties.

Bloods in the 1920s and 1930s, just as bloods in the 1960s and 1970s, felt that in order to be a "communist" one had to join or sympathize with the amerikkkan communist party. They believed that in order to be a "communist" and to adapt scientific socialism, they had to abandon Nationalism. They felt that in order to engage in class struggle, they had to repudiate the struggle of the Nation.

Aren't We fortunate that Mao and Cabral, Ho Chi Minh and Nkrumah, Kim Il Sung and Fanon and so many others, didn't make the same assumptions?

Around the same time that the ABB was gradually de-emphasizing the idea of the Nation, Li Ta-Chao was tutoring Mao and other Chinese revolutionary nationalists, and developing the theory that would later help Mao to conclude that those fighting wars for national liberation not only can -- but must -- be both communists and nationalists.

Li Ta-Chao had -- like Briggs -- begun to study "socialism" and helped introduce it to China. Unlike Briggs, Li Ta-Chao was more adept at studying **scientific** socialism, remaining in tune with his own national reality and the interests of the Chinese people.

He concluded that the entire Chinese nation constituted a "class" within the context of world imperialism. And, Li Ta-Chao has been referred to as the "first Chinese Communist."

(20)

And what did Mao say years later (in 1938, one year after Briggs and Moore were expelled from the CPUSA for their "nationalist" leanings), about nationalism and communism ("Patriotism and Internationalism")?

Can a Communist, who is an internationalist, at the same time be a patriot? We hold that he not only can be but must be. The specific content of patriotism is determined by historical conditions...Thus in wars of national liberation patriotism is applied internationalism...Only those who are politically muddle-headed or have ulterior motives talk nonsense about our having made a mistake and abandoned internationalism." (21)

Mao expressed these views because he was waging a struggle similar to the one that Briggs and the ABB should have waged in the 1920s. He had to wage lonely struggle for years, not only against other organizations that had the favor of sectors of the masses and militants, but against the leadership of his own Party and the Communist International. If Mao and others had been blinded by their class background, and the purely external relationship of forces, their Party would never have recovered from the defeat of 1927 or gone on to win.

While the ABB was de-emphasizing national consciousness because bloods were fleeing the National Territory, Lenin was viewing that scene as part of a total picture...and interpreted the scene from within a more fitting historical context. He concluded that the Nation existed because of material factors that the refugees only confirmed.

Somewhat ironically, he included his findings in his 1920 "Draft Thesis on the National-Colonial Question," which later became the basis for the Communist International's Resolutions of 1928 and 1930 on the "Black Belt Thesis" and the right of New Afrikans to national self-determination. Why could Lenin do what Briggs and other New Afrikans couldn't? Why could Mao see the necessity of waging a war based on China's national reality, while other Chinese "communists" couldn't?

While the ABB was merging with the CPUSA, Ho Chi Minh -- "Nguyen The Patriot" -- and other Vietnamese revolutionary nationalists were forming the first **Vietnamese** communist cells. Ho Chi Minh, too, would have to struggle for years against those who denounced his emphasis on "nationalism" because their brand of communism had been learned by rote, from foreign instructors, on the basis of foreign realities.

The reasons for the ABB's decline, its failure to develop a **New Afrikan** scientific socialist theory and program, and for its merging with the CPUSA -- all this had far less to do with the influence of Garvey, "racism" in the South, or any other primarily external factors. The reasons had to do with the "ideological deficiencies" of the ABB's leadership, their class background, and their orientation.

In battle, one army is victorious and the other is defeated; both the victory and the defeat are determined by internal causes. The one is victorious either because it is strong or because of its competent generalship, the other is vanquished either because it is weak or because of its incompetent generalship; it is through internal causes that external causes become operative. In China in 1927, the defeat of the proletariat by the big bourgeoisie came about through the opportunism then to be found within the Chinese proletariat itself (inside the Chinese Communist Party). When we liquidated this opportunism, the Chinese revolution resumed its advance. Later, the Chinese revolution again suffered severe setbacks at the hands of the enemy, because adventurism had risen within our Party. When we liquidated this adventurism, our cause advanced once again. Thus it can be seen that to lead the revolution to victory, a political party must depend on the correctness of its own political line and the solidity of its own organization. (22)

Some evidence of this is seen in Harry Haywood's account of how the "flaws" in his own "idea of the nation" were pointed out to him. (23)

The ABB failed to build, preserve, and pass on, because they didn't grasp and further develop the prevailing theory and reality of New Afrikan national oppression and the dynamics of world and u.s., settler-imperialism.

They failed because they didn't pursue practical theories and actions that sought to "combine" national reality with the methods of revolutionary scientific socialism.

They failed because they didn't realize that "revolution in amerikkka" will be a consequence of -- not a prerequisite for -- the New Afrikan national liberation revolution (in a way similar to the changes in Portugal that were a consequence of the struggles in Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola).

They failed because they ignored and abandoned all the lessons that our accumulated experience has taught us: Amerikkka fears and struggles to prevent New Afrikan **Independence**, not integration into the mainstream.

They failed -- they abandoned their own organization, their own national reality -- because they had more faith in (white) amerikkka and its "leftists" than they had in themselves and the New Afrikan masses.

The failures of the ABB and similar forces in the 1920s and 1930s, were essentially repeated in the 1960s and 1970s and 80s. They were repeated by RAM, the BPP, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the African Liberation Support Committee, and Afrikan People's Party, and many others, i.e., the BLA-RATF.

B. New Phrases, Evolving Concepts: Part One

"...In the 20th Century, when Black radical thinkers had acquired new habits of thought in keeping, some of them supposed, with the new conditions of their people, their task eventually became the revelation of the older tradition. Not surprisingly, they would discover it first in their history, and finally all around them." (24)

Re-interpretation of the phrase and concept "black liberation" -- and analysis of the movement -- are necessary because the revolutionary orientation of the "BLM" has been undermined by reformist and neocolonialist forces. The objective reality of this transition can be seen on a subjective level in the way that the phrase "BLM" has been all but abandoned by the most advanced sectors of the masses.

The "BLM" is a phrase and concept generally embraced only by the most "naive" among us, and by that variety of petty-bourgeois forces who dominate the remnants of that movement. These forces don't **believe** in, the reality or even the concept of the Nation, they don't struggle for genuine independence, and certainly not for socialism.

The "BLM" is clearly distinguished from the New Afrikan Independence Movement, though the distinction has arisen primarily on an objective and spontaneous basis. We must now sharpen the distinction, develop conscious awareness and understanding, and act appropriately on ideological, political, and organizational levels.

This done, "black liberation" will stand lifeless in the face of phrases, concepts, and a new movement toward **New Afrikan** National Liberation and socialist revolutionary development.

B. 1. "Black Liberation" -- In Transition

"Our generation came to early consciousness in the Civil Rights Movement and high consciousness in the Black Liberation Movement. Many of us expected to see some kind of promise delivered through Black empowerment. I was one of those. We've been shocked by the relative destruction of a movement we grew up in. That progressive era was brought to a screeching halt.

"The more naive among don't realize why this happened..." (25)

It happened because too many people like Baraka were part of the movement's vanguard forces. That is, the movement was misled by people who considered it to be merely "progressive," seeking bourgeois-nationalist "empowerment," and not genuinely revolutionary nationalist independence and socialism.

Baraka's contrast of the "early" consciousness of the CRM (Civil Rights Movement) with the "high" consciousness of the BLM, should be looked upon much like the contrast between the expression of radicalism by the "old" and "new negro" movements. The transition undergone by the latter movement in the 1920s, was essentially repeated in the 1960s, 70s and 80s -- and for similar reasons, i.e., the BLM contained reactionary as well as revolutionary tendencies, and the weaknesses of the latter allowed it to be overcome by the former.

...external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change...external causes become operative through internal causes...through the inner laws of development... (26)

Just as the "old negro radicalism" was the basis for the existence of "new negro radicalism," (there could be no "new" without an "old"), the CRM was the basis for the existence of the BLM.

As Forman put it in his speech: "When the student movement started in February 1960, many of the activists thought they had begun the black revolution. Many of us failed to understand the historical conditions which produced us [i.e., prior student movements in the 1920s, for instance] and the actions we were taking...I am well aware that my presence here is due to many factors, but if it had not been for the people who sang 'We Shall Overcome,' there is no question in my mind that I would not be here today."

We can see that Forman had some recognition of the relative roles of internal and external contradictions in the emergence and development of the BLM. It was surely influenced by external contradictions and developments inside the u.s. empire, and relative to world imperialism, international anti-imperialist and national liberation struggles.

But the internal contradictions of the CRM were the basis for the emergence of the BLM, which then came to stand in opposition to the former's "old methods," etc. However, the composition and character of the BLM unavoidably included bourgeois reformism as an **inherited** element.

That is, as the CRM entered its transition, the BLM emerged **from** it, carrying both positive and negative elements of the CRM forward and upward. The emergence of the BLM was simultaneously a "break with the past" and a continuous development of the most matured positive and negative elements of the CRM.

From the moment of its birth, therefore, the BLM would undergo its own internal struggle between revolutionary and reactionary aspects. What Baraka referred to as the "destruction" of the BLM was really a manifestation of its transition, whereby reaction overcame revolution; the "black liberation" movement turning into its opposite -- and the

most matured elements of **its** positive and negative aspects being incorporated into newly emerging forms of theoretical and organizational practice.

In the process of reaching an understanding as to why -- and how -- this happened (which is essential to the re-building process), We must re-examine, re-analyze, and re-interpret previous experiences.

Struggling for a correct re-interpretation of the Nation's process of development -- with particular attention to the past twenty-five years -- will place the past and present in a new context, and will make our theory and practice more consistent with objective and subjective conditions and needs. Consequently, a more intense, mass-based, viable and sustainable **new** movement can be generated.

The need to re-interpret the past isn't a task unique to our generation or movement. It arises with, and for, each generation and new movement, because our conceptions of reality -- past and present -- are conditioned by the particular character and level of development of objective social, political, and economic relationships, and by the intensity and level of development of internal contradictions, i.e., the "competence and generalship" of the masses and their vanguard forces.

"Factual knowledge" isn't ready-made, unalterable, or absolute. Our knowledge emerges from ignorance, and does so not all at once, but a step at a time. Our knowledge is, at any particular point, incomplete, and inexact. It becomes more complete, and more exact, as We investigate things, accumulate experience, and refine our theories in the course of practice.

Knowledge develops in this way because it is always, at each step, only an "approximation of reality," and since reality is constantly changing, our knowledge only reaches ever closer approximations of an ever changing real world. "Factual knowledge" will never be "absolute" or above re-interpretation, because such an absolute stage would exhaust the possibility for change, growth and development, both in society and in nature.

B. 2. Phrases and Concepts in Transition

Forman began his speech by saying that the words "black liberation" must be understood within the proper historical context. We now want to focus on the functional relation between the phrase ("the words") "black liberation," its underlying concepts, and the transition of the "black liberation movement."

We've seen how the "new negro movement" was co-opted and transformed into its opposite. The co-option of the **movement** couldn't occur without the co-option of the **phrase** "new negro." Turning the movement into its opposite couldn't happen without also turning into their opposites the **concepts** that had developed on the basis of the nation's reality, and that had then inspired and guided the movement and the masses.

The transition of the "new negro movement" was a gradual process, largely unnoticed by observers and participants alike. Even after the movement had assumed a distinctive reactionary character, the phrase "new negro" continued to be used, as if the movement still had a national revolutionary orientation, still inspired and guided by its original concepts and goals.

In the same way, the "black liberation movement" has assumed a bourgeois-reformist character, but the phrase continues to be used by several organizations and political tendencies, and they do so in a manner not wholly consistent with each other. The inconsistency arises because most of those who use it have both feet in the reactionary movement. They've turned the phrase into a euphemism for "ethnic pluralist" or multinational reformism. As in the 60s, when folds used "race" to characterize the struggle and avoided the word "Nation," so today they use "black" liberation instead of **National** or **New Afrikan** liberation, because genuine national liberation ain't what they're about.

Other forces that continue to use the phrase have only one foot in the reactionary movement. They know the "BLM" has lost all relation to its former revolutionary

orientation, but they trail behind the masses rather than lead them, and attempt to maintain or build "unity" with the forces of reaction...

Phrases

Why is this treatment of phrases and concepts important? How does it relate to the process of re-building the national revolutionary movement?

As we say so often, about so many things, phrases (and concepts) don't fall from the sky. Phrases such as "black liberation" arise on the basis of particular historical conditions, and these conditions imply particular methods and goals. When these conditions change, the phrase (and the concepts and movement) must be modified, because they no longer have their prior relation to reality. If the phrase isn't modified (or abandoned) its continued use will work to camouflage a changed reality; it will help divert the struggle and distort the character of the movement.

"Black...Liberation" says many things -- about our people, our past experience, and our aspirations for the future.

Concepts

Like phrases, concepts are (ideally) formed on the basis of particular conditions. They are abstract ideas given a generalized shape on the basis of some analysis of past experiences, the causes of these experiences, and usually imply a solution. "Black Liberation" was a phrase, a concept, and a movement that arose on the basis of our historical experience with u.s. settler-imperialism, and the Nation's need to struggle for independence and socialism.

But, the validity and continued viability of concepts must be tested and proven through practice:

...original ideas, theories, plans or programs are seldom realized without any alteration. This is because people engaged in changing reality are usually subject to numerous limitations; they are limited not only by existing scientific and technological conditions but also by the development of the objective process itself and the degree to which this process has become manifest (the aspects and the essence of the objective process have not yet been fully revealed). In such a situation, ideas, theories, plans or programs are usually altered partially and sometimes even wholly, because of the discovery of unforeseen circumstances in the course of practice. That is to say, it does happen that the original ideas, theories, plans or programs fail to correspond with reality either in whole or in part, and are wholly or partially incorrect. In many instances, failures have to be repeated many times before errors in knowledge can be corrected and correspondence with the laws of the objective process achieved, and consequently before the subjective can be transformed into the objective, or in other words, before the anticipated results can be achieved in practice. (27)

Under the banner of "black liberation" we engaged in political, economic, socio-cultural and armed forms of practice but, as Baraka put it, the "promise" wasn't delivered. That is, the revolutionary forces failed to produce the anticipated results of our theories and plans.

And, the cause of this failure is primarily a result of the internal conditions and contradictions of the Nation and movement -- a glimpse of which We can get by making another brief referential departure, before going on to examine the phrase and concept "black liberation" in more depth.

B. 3. An Exemplary (Point of) Reference: "Black Power"

"But an understanding of what is meant by revolutionary black power hinges on how one sees the fundamental causes of our condition today. From this analysis will flow many [different] things and many [different] decisions and many [different] ways of solving our problems."

As when making the departure to check out the "new negro movement" and the ABB, We can only make reference here to a few of those aspects of "black power" that are most relevant to the themes of these Notes. Furthermore, We remind ourselves that no theme can be exhausted, and no treatment of any subject can stand as final or absolute.

We're into a process of reorientation and reorganization, and it won't be completed overnight. As with the movements, organizations, and struggles of the 1920s, We'll return to the subject of "black power" in future issues of **VITA WA WATU**. With that said...

We're concerned about re-building a movement for the independence and socialist development of New Afrika. We're concerned about basing this new movement among the masses of our people. We're concerned about reaching and helping to train cadres that will shoulder many of the responsibilities of the new movement. These concerns (and others) can't be separated from a correct understanding of the causes of our condition today. Reaching a correct understanding can't be divorced from the method used in the analytical process.

The dialectical and materialist method helps us to reach and clarify an understanding of "cause" which says: "revolutionary black power" emerges on the basis of two contradictions: 1) between the Nation and u.s. settler-imperialism; 2) between the national revolutionary and the bourgeois-neocolonialist trends inside the Nation.

"Revolutionary black power" would, therefore, aim to liberate the Nation, and to do so in a manner consistent with the stand and interests of the Nation's most revolutionary class and strata. The essence of the national revolutionary trend has historically been composed of "peasant-proletarian" masses, while the composition of the bourgeois-neocolonialist trend has been represented by petty-bourgeois forces -- who find it difficult (or simply aren't inclined) to "commit class suicide."

The popular response to the nationally televised image and sound of Stokely Carmichael's shout of "What do we want? **Black Power!**" in the summer of 1966, indicated how consistent the phrase's revolutionary aspect was with the historical stand of the New Afrikan masses. By being televised, the phrase immediately reached millions, and the masses began to slowly but surely transform the concept of "black power" into a mighty material force. This initiative was based on the historical context of the phrase, which was instinctively understood by the masses, who began to use it as a weapon of struggle in a manner (as Forman says), "independent of the u.s."

"Independence" is the word that correctly describes the historical context of "revolutionary black power." It's this kind of power that was sought by the Africans who fought and fled the Spanish in "New Spain" (Mexico), regaining their independence in a form called palenques, and themselves called cimmarones ("maroons" in the english language). (28)

"Revolutionary black power" was pursued by those Africans/New Afrikans who fought and fled the north amerikkkan settlers to re-establish their independence in portions of what We now call Virginia, North and South Carolina, and especially, Florida.

"Revolutionary black power" was pursued by all the bloods in the 18th and 19th centuries who fought to conquer the settlers in their regions and establish "Black Republics" (i.e., 1739 Virginia; Gabriel, Denmark, and Nat, etc.).

When bloods in 20th century amerikkka sought "some land of our own," they were giving expression to the revolutionary aspect of "black power." Today, this revolutionary aspect would be called "state power," pursued and developed by New Afrika and other nations dominated by imperialism, in the form of national liberation revolutions.

On the other hand, Stokely's 1966 shout of the phrase "black power" also stirred the movement of bourgeois forces, who sought to pursue the development of the historical context of the reactionary aspect of the concept.

While the masses wanted national independence, the bourgeois-neocolonialists wanted "control of the economics and politics of our communities" -- the contemporary expression of amerikkka's version of the "formal independence" granted the reactionary bourgeois forces of other colonized nations that have forced neo-colonial arrangements with imperialism.

The historical context of "reactionary black power" is expressed by those who sought to carry on the tradition of being allies of the slavers. In their struggle to establish this alliance, and to impose themselves as "ruling class Africans," they necessarily adopt rhetoric and symbolism that appears "revolutionary" or simply militant and nationalist, because they must appeal to the revolutionary and nationalist aspirations of the masses and appear to represent the interests of the Nation. Without appearing to speak for and to have the support of the masses, they have no "bargaining chips" in their dialogue with the forces of imperialism.

The Nation's fundamental internal contradiction has been expressed by the struggle between those New Afrikans seeking to regain national independence and a form of social development opposed to that of the empire (i.e., anti-capitalist), and those forces seeking to accommodate themselves to u.s. settler-imperialist domination, and establish themselves as the pseudo-bourgeoisie.

The contradiction between these trends is older than the Nation itself. The struggle between them has assumed many forms over more than four hundred years, but all forms arise on the basis of the contradictions inherent to the social structures of Africans and New Afrikans, as well as being conditioned by the contradictions between oppressed and oppressor nations, particularly in the imperialist era.

Forman indicates the external influence (i.e., "the co-operation of the ruling-class Africans with the slaving white merchants") that conditioned the particular form(s) that the Nation's internal class contradictions have assumed. He says little, though (but suggests We check out the works of Walter Rodney) about the pre-existing contradictions that were the basis for the emergence of a "ruling class" within numerous African societies, and their subsequent alliances with euro-amerikkkan capitalist and imperialist forces.

As Africans were forcibly brought to the "new world," specifically amerikkka, the conditions which forged a new Afrikan nation and characterized the struggle against imperialism, also forged new forms of contradictions between internal class forces. These internal forces and relations (of production) couldn't develop **freely**, and were "paralyzed" by imperialist domination. But the paralysis wasn't complete, for two reasons: 1) the "self-motion" of the Nation and all its internal elements; 2) the "self-interest" of imperialism, which cultivated national reactionary forces as their agents and allies, and which helped to create a material foundation for this alliance in the form of both colonial (pre-1865) and neo-colonial (post 1865) administrative and exploitative structures.

Understanding the historical and material roots of these trends and the forms taken by each as they struggle and develop, should remind us that the essence of our struggle is social. That is, it's not merely about raising the national (or biological) flag, but about

building a society free of all forms of social (i.e., class and sexual) oppression and exploitation.

That Forman had some awareness of the existence, cause, and contemporary expression of the nation's fundamental internal contradiction is evident by several references in his speech. In particular, there's his mention of the discussions then being held by SNCC concerning "revolutionary black power as opposed to reactionary black power, for we have seen instance after instance in which conservative forces have tried to explain away or excuse the revolutionary aspect of black power."

It wouldn't be entirely improper to assume that Forman and other movement forces with a national revolutionary orientation were concerned with avoiding the ascendancy of the accommodationist, reactionary, bourgeois-neocolonial trend. The stress he placed in the speech on correctly interpreting "black liberation," the need for mass-based activity and mass leadership, class analysis, an understanding of repression and counter-revolution, and even his mention of individualism (a fundamental aspect of bourgeois philosophy and social practice and relations), all indicate this concern. It all constitutes an implicit encouragement for the adoption of a theoretical perspective upon which steps should be taken to oppose the reactionary threat, and impose more consistent revolutionary thought and practice.

The eventual dominance of the reactionary forces couldn't help but influence the ideological and practical direction of the BLM and the nation's struggle, as we left the 60s and entered the 1970s and 80s.

But again: the "break with the past" was also a continuation of the past. To glimpse the continuity, we don't have to go back four or five centuries, but only to the 1920s. We suggest that there were parallels between the rise, character, and transition of the "new negro movement" and the ABB, and the phrase, concept, and movement around "black power."

The "black power movement" (BPM) emerged largely in opposition to "old leadership and old methods," and claimed to represent a "new radicalism" that was a consequence of new conditions and of the needs and demands of the masses. Of course, we now see that even then, the radicalism wasn't new, and the militancy wasn't genuine.

In the fall of 1966 -- only months after the Mississippi shout -- Stokely was defining the significance of the phrase "black power" by saying that it assumed the new militant tone of the masses, and their desire to remove "buffers" (i.e., "old leaders") between liberal whites and "angry young blacks" (i.e., "new leaders"). He also described the movement for "black power" as one that would provide a "position of strength" from which the masses could "make their voices heard" -- by whites. (29)

Clearly, this is nothing but a new form of reactionary petty-bourgeois struggle on an internal level, and a struggle against the nation's revolutionary forces (the masses), and a struggle to capture the attention of the empire, based on harnessing the "group power" of the people.

Just as A. Philip Randolph's early support of the imperialist "WW1" indicated the contradictions internal to the "new negro movement," the analysis of "the cause of our condition today" made by Forman and Stokely indicated the contradictions internal to the "BPM."

While Forman was warning against the dangers of a purely "skin analysis," and encouraging an analysis that would 'talk in terms of the colonized and the colonizer, the economic base of colonialism, and the industrial-military complex' (i.e., the settler-imperialist state), Carmichael was saying, "The only reason we have to get together is the color of our skins...We are going to build a movement in this country based on the color of our skins..." (30)

What turned out to be the dominant aspect of "black power," could pursue a movement based on "skin analysis" (i.e., a struggle against racism), because bourgeois-neocolonialist forces aren't inclined to engage in struggle to transform the material reality that produces and uses racism. Bourgeois-neocolonialists can confine themselves to a

struggle to "control the politics and economics of our communities" because **they** seek the levers of control, and they don't seek to change the capitalist-imperialist mode of politics and economics.

That is why, by the time of Forman's speech in November, 1967, the revolutionary aspect of the BPM had already lost most of its ground to the reactionary forces. Stokely (and others) had already made it clear that, from their standpoint, "Black people do not want to 'take over' this country...They want to be in (the whites') place because that is where a decent life can be had." (31)

Can We be surprised when Richard Nixon used the phrase in 1968 to support the state's neocolonialist program of "black capitalism"? (32)

C. New Phrases, Evolving Concepts: Part Two

"...in the face of destructive action by imperialist domination, the masses retain their identity, separate and distinct from that of the colonial power. It is worthwhile, therefore, to decide in what circumstances this retention is possible; why, when, and at what levels of the dominated society is raised the problem of the loss or absence of identity; and in consequence it becomes necessary to assert or reassert in the framework of the pre-independence movement a separate and distinct identity from that of the colonial power." (33)

The unique character of the New Afrikan national reality increases the difficulty one may have in recognizing and accepting it. This national reality is at the heart of the revolutionary aspect of "black power" or, of the "black liberation movement."

Any New Afrikan movement that's truly based in the masses can't help but struggle to express the national identity of New Afrikan people. It's a struggle that arises independent of the will.

The struggle for national identity is inseparable from the struggle for independence. Yet, it has its own internal dynamic, and its manifestation can be seen to run on the North American continent in continuous development from the 16th century to the present.

A key element in the transition of the BLM is the loss of relevance of the term "black" to identify our people, and to identify the type of consciousness innate to our collective, national revolutionary, psyche. "Blackness" was necessary, but not sufficient, because it couldn't fulfill the requirements of phrases and concepts needed to inspire and consolidate **National** consciousness; to sustain a New Afrikan (not "black") national revolutionary movement.

C. 1. "Black Liberation" -- Its Meaning as a Phrase and Concept

"Black Liberation" was used as a phrase to convey abstract and generalized ideas (concepts) concerning the biological ("racial") and the national ("sociological") identity of New Afrikan people. The revolutionary aspect of the phrase was overcome by the reactionary aspect, which emphasized "race," and distorted the national essence with an emphasis on "ethnic pluralism" or "group power" that remained within the amerikkkan framework.

The phrase "black liberation" also conveyed concepts regarding the "purpose" of New Afrikan people (i.e., "liberation"), and the "direction" or "method" by which liberation was to be obtained, i.e., protracted people's war.

However, just as the reactionary forces dominated the development of the "identity" factor, they also dominated the development of the other two factors. "Liberation" and "method" had revolutionary and reactionary aspects. The revolutionary aspect of "liberation" was based on the national reality, within the context of imperialist domination, i.e., liberation of the process of development of the nation's productive forces. The revolutionary aspect of the "method" for achieving liberation, therefore, had to be consistent with the contradictions arising from imperialist domination, i.e., revolutionary nationalist violence to overcome the permanent violence of imperialism.

The struggle to liberate the nation became a struggle waged by reactionary petty-bourgeois and pseudo-bourgeois forces (who appealed to the national revolutionary aspirations of the masses for support) to "control the politics and the economics of the community." The revolutionary aspect of the "method" was transformed into peaceful struggle for economic and political "parity" with settler bourgeois-imperialist forces. In the 1980s, they call it a struggle for "empowerment."

C. 2. "Black Liberation" -- The Development of the Concept

The phrase "black liberation" was essentially a tool of the concepts; and, though abstract and generalized, and largely unarticulated, the concepts themselves didn't fall from the sky. They arose on the basis of the material reality of the lives of the people and the nature of the contradiction between New Afrika and the u.s. empire.

That is, while the unique New Afrikan nation was given its particular shape on the North American continent, the "roots" of the nation and its "history" (those internal contradictions which serve as the basis for its development) are to be uncovered through analysis of the societies on the African continent from which We came.

Our enslavement 'took us out of our own history,' but it didn't destroy that history or totally paralyze the powers of "self-motion" inherent to the people transplanted into this unique colonial status.

The identity We had on the African continent wasn't so much "lost" as it was transformed. In the process of transformation, the primary elements determining the new form were those internal to ourselves, not those external (i.e., euro-amerikkkan intellectual and physical influences or restrictions). We maintained our own "inner impulses to development" -- the essence of the productive forces and social relations as they existed on the continent, because they were us; We "brought" them here and manifested them as We labored and lived, loved and struggled.

Therefore, We must further develop the concept of the Nation not only vis-a-vis the empire. We must articulate -- and base daily practice upon -- the Nation's reality and the process of its development as it existed/originated within the continental African social structures, and the "residue" of these structures that were transplanted here, and which continued to develop, although in a distorted, unfree form.

We too easily forget (and fail to pass on knowledge regarding) the fierce struggle waged in the late 60s over the terms "black" and "negro." Specifically, We forget now (and were largely unaware of then) the historical precedents of that struggle.

That is, the "black -vs- negro" struggle in the 60s was connected to the efforts to maintain an identity separate and distinct from the colonial power, made by bloods who arrived on the shores of North America between the 15th and 19th centuries, with both national ("tribal") and continental ("African") identities.

The efforts to maintain separate identity were manifested by the terms these bloods used to identify themselves, and by their attempts to exercise the use of these terms on some land of their own, also separate and distinct from the colonial power(s), i.e., in swamps and mountains and other land bases, in Florida, the Carolinas, Virginia, and elsewhere, as well as within the "slave communities" on the plantations.

The external influence of the empire conditioned the transformation of our identity, in that the specific national/tribal ones weren't (sufficiently) retained. But the internal "residue" and the very nature of our oppression were the primary factors in the retention of our identity as Africans. The masses of our people -- even if only unconsciously -- have never abandoned this identity (another manifestation of their refusal to accommodate themselves to the u.s.), and the unresolved contradictions between the Nation and u.s. settler-imperialism continue to manifest the material basis for its retention -- only the form has changed.

This interrelated struggle to maintain a bio-sociological identity has an unbroken (though largely hidden and distorted) record of development that's pregnant with lessons relevant to present organizational and ideo-theoretical tasks.

An examination of this record (relevant to the terms used to identify the people/Nation) would reveal key twists and turns in the Nation's eco-political development as well as its socio-cultural development. It would reveal the influence of external and objective factors as they conditioned (stimulated and/or caused retrogression) the origin, use, demise/transition of certain terms.

Such an examination would also reveal the ways in which the terms were influenced on the basis of the internal struggle and development of the national revolutionary and the bourgeois-neocolonialist trends (and the relative strengths and weaknesses of each) within the context of the Nation's overall development, and in its struggle against the empire for independence.

For example: We arrived here, generally, as Africans. For a period of time, We continued to collectively refer to ourselves as such. But, as the conditions of oppression and our own internal "residue" forged the New Afrikan nation, a consequent development of internal distinctions (i.e., embryonic class divisions) appeared. These distinctions were based on and manifested differing types and levels of consciousness and material relationships. In turn, these distinctions were reflected in the efforts to retain or to abandon, an identity separate and distinct from the colonial power.

Certain documentary evidence exists to confirm that well into the last half of the 19th century (the 1870s-90s), New Afrikan people identified themselves as "Africans," "of the African race," or "of African heritage."

But much earlier in that century, forces acting on a petty-bourgeois, neocolonialist orientation, had already begun to abandon their bio-national identity. (34)

As We lead into the next section, We want to emphasize that the objective of a focus on "identity" is to help re-establish, further develop, and maintain continuity of the national revolutionary tradition. The research, dialogue, and practical activity surrounding the effort would result not only in a strengthened ideo-theoretical weapon, but a broadened and a more consistent practice.

C. 3. To Correctly Interpret "Historical Context"

With the opening sentence of his speech, Forman pointed out the need to view "black liberation" from within a correct historical context. In order to do this, We must first know what "history" is. It's certainly more than "resistance," and more than a "colonial relationship."

This focus on "history" aims to outline the evolution of the "liberation" concept, as well as the development of the concepts regarding the "methods" best suited for achieving genuine national liberation. We'll do this by relying heavily on Amilcar Cabral's definition of "history," and that "liberation" means freeing the process of development of the nation's productive forces. It will also indicate that the method for achieving genuine liberation is protracted people's war.

A Preface: "Our Story"

1. What it is:

-- Facts and analysis of the origin and development of the Nation and its struggle for liberation and socialism.

-- A presentation of these facts and analyses from a New Afrikan "Ujamaa" perspective.

2. How it differs from "history"

-- "His story" presents our story as "part of the amerikkkan experience," while Our Story is our experience as people kidnapped, **taken out of** our "history," and evolving into a new nation.

-- "His story" is about a struggle for "equal participation" and Our Story is about a struggle for independence and socialism.

3. Why it's important:

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-- Because Our Story has, up to now, been presented as "black his story," and hasn't served the struggle for national liberation.

-- There can be no liberation unless Our Story is told...and made.

The presentation of amerikkkan history and/or of "black his story" is an attempt not merely to "rationalize racism," but to hide or distort the character of the fundamental contradiction between New Afrika and the empire. They can mask and redefine the nature of the contradiction by calling it a "race relations problem," or an "ethnic identity problem."

Once they redefine the nature of the contradiction, they move to define the method of its resolution, i.e., "pluralism," or "equal opportunity" to be imperialists, etc.

Rather than call it "history," We prefer to call it "social development," because that's what it really is. Calling it social development also helps lead us away from western/euro-centric and bourgeois concepts of "history" (i.e., social development) that emphasize the roles of individuals versus the roles of the masses; emphasize the significance of particular events, rather than the significance of each day's activity to produce and to survive and develop.

"History" promotes the idealist and mechanical, versus the dialectical and materialist, interpretation of social development.

We want to make this short and direct, and the best way to do that is to quote Cabral.

In **The Weapon of Theory**, Cabral asks, "does history begin only with the development of the phenomenon of 'class,' and consequently of class struggle? To reply in the affirmative would be to place outside history the whole period of life of human groups from the discovery of hunting, and later of nomadic and sedentary agriculture, to the organization of herds and the private appropriation of land. It would be to consider -- and this we refuse to do -- that various human groups in Africa, Asia, and Latin America were living without history, or outside history, at the time when they were subjected to the yoke of imperialism." (35)

Cabral replied in the negative, and asserted that societies had "history" before the development of herds and private appropriation of land, classes and class struggle. This assertion was based on Cabral's understanding of the concept "mode of production" -- which is a feature of all societies -- and which has as its primary determining element, the level and development of the society's **productive forces**.

On this basis, Cabral concluded that all peoples would continue to have history, or, that history would have continuity, because **people** would continue to **produce** in order to satisfy the needs of mind and body, "which are the basis of the development of the forces of production." (36)

We should pause and draw on what We've covered.

People will continue to **have** history because they will continue to **make** history. We will continue to make history just as We've always made it -- by engaging in productive and social relations with each other, with and "against" nature, to satisfy our needs of mind and body. Our efforts to feed, clothe, and shelter ourselves are, at bottom, what "history" **is**, and what history is all about.

We had a **particular** history of our own at the time of our being subjected to the yoke of slavery and imperialism. Being dominated by imperialism didn't make us lose **history** of our ability to continue to make history -- it simply interrupted the process of our development as it would have gone on if not for imperialist domination.

The point is, kidnappin and slavery was still **our** history, and not just "part of the amerikkkan experience."

The point may still be hard to grasp. A firm grip requires having some understanding of the concepts "mode of production," and particularly, "productive forces," because these constitute the material base of "history." Before We go into these concepts in more depth, let's return to Cabral.

In his "National Liberation and Culture," Cabral says: "Let us examine the nature of national liberation. We shall consider this historical phenomenon in its contemporary context, that is, national liberation in opposition to imperialist domination. The latter is, as we know, distinct both in form and in content from preceding types of foreign domination (tribal, military-aristocratic, feudal, and capitalist domination in the free competition era).

"The principal characteristic, common to every kind of imperialist domination, is the negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violently usurping the free operation of the process of development of the productive forces. Now, in any given society, the level of development of the productive forces and the system for social utilization of these forces (the ownership system) determine the mode of production. In our opinion, the mode of production whose contradictions are manifested with more or less intensity through the class struggle, is the principal factor in the history of any human group, the level of the productive forces being the true and permanent driving power of history.

"For every society, for every group of people, considered as an evolving entity, the level of the productive forces indicates the stage of development of the society and of each of its components in relation to nature, its capacity to act or to react consciously in relation to nature. It indicates and conditions the type of material relationships (expressed objectively or subjectively) which exists among the various elements or groups constituting the society in question. Relationships and types of relationships between [people] and nature, between [people and their] environment. Relationships and types of relationships among the individual or collective components of a society. To speak of these is to speak of history...

"...The objective of national liberation, is, therefore...the liberation of the process of development of national productive forces. Therefore, national liberation takes place when, and only when, national productive forces are completely free of all kinds of foreign domination. The liberation of productive forces and consequently the ability to determine the mode of production most appropriate to the evolution of the liberated people, necessarily opens up new prospects for the cultural development of the society in question, by returning to that society all its capacity to create progress." (37)

Now, the ideal situation would be one in which further elaboration of these lengthy quotes would be unnecessary. But the need to elaborate arises for several reasons. One of those reasons is that We need to begin to see our history as far more than what Forman described as "one of resistance." Such a description is necessary, but not sufficient.

Another reason for further elaboration is that We've all been "educated" in the schools of the enemy, and We've come of age in a society dominated by the philosophy, the ideas, the concepts of the enemy. And, even when it comes to "revolutionary" thought and practice, We've yet to transcend the enemies' particular manner of interpreting all phenomena.

To interpret "black"/**Liberation** from within the correct historical context, is first to understand "history" and the process of its development. This understanding will not only help us to grasp more firmly the content and objective of "national liberation," it will also help us to see more clearly the process of New Afrika's origin and development as a new, unique nation, oppressed and exploited by u.s. settler-imperialism.

"History" is that fundamental process whereby **people** engage in the productive and social activities of their society. "History" has as its material base, the level and development of a society's productive forces. What are "productive forces"?

The concept "productive forces" describes: 1) **People**; 2) the experience and labor skills that people inherit and acquire in the process of maintaining and developing their

societies; 3) the instruments/tools/technology that people acquire from previous generations, and which they further develop; the instruments they create on the basis of the unique conditions and/or new materials they find in their own experience.

We've emphasized **people** here, because they/We are the fundamental, inextricable element not merely in the concept "productive forces," but in society and its total development. **People** make and use tools, apply their skills and experience to the transformation of raw materials, nature, and society. **People** make history, and it's the masses that primarily, ultimately, determine the course of social development.

African peoples were making our own *particular* history when our villages were raided and other means were used to halt the free operation of the process of development of our productive forces. The halting of this free operation marks the beginning of imperialist domination -- but it doesn't signal an "end" to our history, nor a total destruction of the process of our distinct social development.

The key to our history and social development is the people our selves, and our skills and experience in the production process. Imperialism didn't destroy the people or our skills -- it merely kept us from employing our skills towards the continued development of our own societies.

Imperialism dominated the society and diverted/appropriated our labor, skills, experience, etc. Imperialism partially paralyzed our society by denying its independence and by "usurping the free operation of the process of development of the productive forces."

The origin of the New Afrikan nation was based on African social structures being subjected, on the North American continent, to a unique form of what Cabral calls "apparent conservation," i.e., "segregation" on plantations and "ghettoes," "racism," etc.

But, our national productive forces were **transplanted** to the colonies established by european settlers. **We** were transplanted; We were forced to use our tools (many of which were previously unknown to the european settlers), our skills (many of which were also unknown to the settlers) and employ our labor towards what would actually become the parallel development of the New Afrikan nation, and the amerikkkan empire.

We did more than pick cotton. The gold and iron mining in parts of West Africa was an initial attraction for the Portuguese -- and We brought the skills with us and were forced to put them to use for the primary development of the empire.

We also brought what came to be a "distorted continuation of the various forms of collective labor common to Africa," (38) and these forms of labor also reflect the social relations of production that rest on the development of the nation's productive forces.

Starobin's Industrial Slavery in the Old South, points toward many of the skills that had their origin on the Continent, and were later exploited by amerikkka, i.e., architecture, carpentry, blacksmithing, brick and iron manufacture, textile production, and fishing. (39)

And, from Peter Wood, We pick up on skills related to agriculture and rice production, animal husbandry, and others.

For instance, We learn that the settlers were "notably less familiar with the agricultural peculiarities of a southern Atlantic coastal climate than their [Native (Indian) Nation] neighbors or their West African and Caribbean slaves." (40)

The settlers initially tried to use closed grazing for their herds, a form they were used to in their homelands, but one which proved unworkable here. "While white settlers felt uneasy about open grazing at first, numerous black newcomers understood this practice. In Africa, although domesticated cattle were absent from the area near the Congo due to the presence of the tsetse fly, such animals were common across much of the Western region, and many of the slaves entering South Carolina after 1670 may have had experience in tending large herds. People from along the Gambia River, a location for which South Carolina slave dealers came to hold a steady preference, were expert horsemen and herders.

English visitors expressed high admiration for their standards of cleanliness with respect to dairy products, and contemporary descriptions of local animal husbandry bear a striking resemblance to what would later appear in Carolina. Gambian herds grazed on the open savannahs bordering the river and in the low-lying paddy fields when the rice crop was off; at night they were tethered within a cattlefield and guarded by several armed men. African stock was even traded for export occasionally during the seventeenth century.

"As early as the 1670s there is evidence of absentee investors relying upon...slaves to develop herds of cattle in Carolina...Even when the white owners lived within the province, the care of their livestock often fell to a black..." (41)

It was our prior familiarity with rice production in Africa, that enabled the settlers to nurture its cultivation in the southern colonies.

To close out the point: New Afrikan (national) liberation became an issue when euro-amerikkkan imperialism intervened upon African societies and halted the free operation of our process of development. They continue to do so. Electing "black" mayors and presidents of capitalist-imperialist amerikkka will not constitute **National Liberation**.

New Afrika will be free only when the nation's productive forces are free of the capitalist-imperialist mode of production. This is what "Independence and Socialism" is all about. It's achievement will require the generation and success of a protracted, people's war.

"...there is not, and cannot be national liberation without the use of liberating violence by the nationalist forces, to answer the criminal violence of the agents of imperialism." (42)

D. The "Masses" -- Their Role in Social Development and the Revolutionary Process

Throughout these Notes, We've indicated our belief that among the reasons for the failures of previous movements has been their reluctance or inability to base themselves deeply, firmly, and permanently among the masses of New Afrikan people.

If We intend to avoid a similar mistake, then not only must We act where they failed to act. Our actions must be inspired and guided by a system of thought that's more precise than those of the past.

Most of us are aware of various misconceptions of "the masses" held by aspiring New Afrikan revolutionary cadres. Some of us have thought of the masses as merely "the lowest strata" of the population, who allegedly possess an inherent subjective revolutionary capacity. So, We went and hung out with some "lumpen," for instance, and claimed We were "working with **the** masses."

Many of us deal with the concept "masses," and form mental pictures of large numbers of people. That is, We think of "the masses" in terms of quantity, rather in terms of quality.

Social Development

On the most general level, when We talk about "the masses," We're talking about an undifferentiated, heterogeneous whole. The term refers to an abstract category that embraces the majority of the Nation's population -- a majority that engages in (socially necessary) labor.

Rather than constituting a distinct class formation, "the masses" of New Afrikan people presently includes agricultural and industrial workers, the unemployed, lower elements of the petty-bourgeoisie, the "lumpen," and a small number of what We'd call "patriotic pseudo-bourgeoisie."

The revolutionary capacity of the masses is first of all an objective one, which stems from their role in social production, which in itself pushes forward social development, i.e., the making of history. No significant change or development takes place in society -- or in the revolutionary process -- without the active participation and support of the masses. To recognize and act on this objective role is what We mean when We refer to the "mass stand."

We just mentioned the present composition of "the masses," because the conception of the category changes with the rise of each historical stage.

That is, during the colonial stage ("chattel slavery"), the "masses" were mainly "peasants"; as We entered the neocolonial stage ("reconstruction" or "emancipation"), and up to the imperialist "world war two," the concept "masses" still largely referred to "peasants" and sharecroppers, along with an ever-growing class of industrial workers. Or, to be more precise, the largest class within the masses, is the working class.

(The resistance waged from loss of independence to approximately 1865, was waged with "peasants" as the primary force; from 1865 to app. 1915, the primary force in the struggle were "peasants", sharecroppers, and the growing working class. From app. 1917 to 1945, the balance in the primary revolutionary force began to shift to include a majority of workers, but still included a significant number of "peasants" and sharecroppers. From 1945 to the present, workers have been the primary revolutionary force within the masses.

While all stages involved the participation of the "whole people," or the "masses," the mainstays were "laborers," and during each period, the "laborers" were either "peasants" or workers.

Each period also shows the character of the struggle, i.e., not until after 1865 did the appearance of distinct "modern" socialist objective and character arise. Prior to that point, and remaining dominant, was the "national democratic" character; the content being the demand for land and independence. The character began to change as the contradiction between New Afrika and the empire became more acute. The character became more and

more clearly one of land, independence and socialism -- with the latter aspect actually becoming decisive for genuine independence.)

The Nation's struggle for independence has always had a "mass" character. This stems from the fact that the majority of the people both prior to and subsequent to imperialist domination, were active laborers. Secondly, when imperialism dominated the Nation, this domination effected the entire population.

The objective role of the masses in the Nation's social development, and the adverse effect of imperialist domination on the majority of our people constitutes the framework for what some refer to as the "united front" character of the independence struggle.

That is, the patriotic element (the interest in fighting for the existence and interests of the Nation) comes to the fore, and every (patriotic) New Afrikan who so chooses, can participate in and support the independence struggle.

But, not every New Afrikan has the same revolutionary capacity. That is, not every New Afrikan individual, nor every class, has the same interest in or inclination for, socialist development.

Therefore, "the struggle for land and socialism utilizes 'united fronts' with the understanding that there is no such thing as a classless front. Struggle around common interests, and the very phrase 'united front,' implies the existence of differing interests, represented by differing classes. The question becomes: which class builds and leads the front and the entire struggle which the front is to serve? How will this class build and lead - the front, the struggle, and the newly independent nation?" (43)

The Role of the Masses in the Revolutionary Process

The objective role of the masses in pushing forward social development and in the nation's struggle for independence, is not enough to insure the realization of their own subjective revolutionary potential, nor the development and success of genuine national liberation revolution.

The masses have always fulfilled their objective role, but their lack of self-consciousness and systematic revolutionary organization and leadership has time and again left room for their manipulation by reactionary forces. In such situations, the masses have been used, on the subjective level, to help make the history of amerikkkan settler-imperialism and of the nation's own rising neocolonial bourgeois forces.

The empire and New Afrikan neocolonialists have so easily misled the masses, because the masses have lacked leadership arising from within themselves.

To transform the objective role of the masses into subjective national revolutionary development, the most consistent revolutionary class within the masses must become an ever-more primary focus of New Afrikan cadres.

E. Comments on "What and How To Organize?"

Go to the people
Live among them
Learn from them
Love them
Serve them
Plan with them
Start with what they know
Build on what they have

Kwame Nkrumah

"What and how to organize?" -- We won't pretend to have all the answers, or any of the answers to these questions. But, We'll share a few of our thoughts on them.

We think general and particular context are among the initial considerations. That is, generally, who We are as a people, and where We wanna go, inform our answers and the process of arriving at them. Particularly, We'd be more concerned about the present stage of struggle, and the objective and subjective conditions.

For ourselves, We approach the questions from within the context of "re-building," reorientation and reorganization. This is not a high tide of struggle, and We aren't likely to join the masses in a charge on the barricades of imperialism at the next sunrise.

Much of our present thought and practice has been partly inspired by some words from Le Duan: "Generally speaking, cadres are products of a movement. They mature in the organization, in the life and activity of the organization, in the process of work and struggle to bring to reality the political line and tasks. On the other hand, in order to give rise to a movement and to ensure its more and more vigorous development, We must have cadres. To ensure that our organizations can operate and operate fruitfully, We must have cadres, and good ones at that. That is why the foremost task of all revolutionary movements and all revolutionary organizations is **to endeavor to train and foster cadres** in a systematic manner. At the same time, cadres must endeavor to **train themselves** and **raise their capabilities**. This task is now posed before us in all its urgency." (44)

While We focus on cadres, much of the theoretical and practical work in this regard stresses the "mass element." That is, We stress the need to **go to** the people, rather than expect the people to come to us.

We try to test our theory in practice. That is, We've found that in seeking out cadres, and in doing work among the people with cadres, the best approach is not usually one where We immediately begin to talk about armed struggle, or to berate folks for not supporting POW's.

The people **struggle** each and every day. They know of the need for change from their own experiences. What they **don't** know is that they can depend on us to help them realize a better life.

So, We **go to** the people, and We live among them. It sometimes takes weeks, or months, before a person or small group comes to trust us. During these weeks and months, We must show ourselves to be "real people," and to be righteous, helpful, and reliable.

It's about providing transportation for an elderly Brother or Sister who otherwise couldn't make it to the doctor's office. It's about making routine phone calls and visits to homes to inquire about folks' welfare and to **find** (observe?) needs to serve.

We must provide examples if We expect to inspire peoples' commitment to the goal of independence. The masses must be persuaded by deed as well as by word, that the struggle and its success is the only way for them to realize "material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children." (Cabral)

We must begin to **go to** the people. Once this is done, the questions "what and how to organize?" will begin to answer themselves. "What" to organize is there in the lives of the people. "How" to organize is something that will begin to flow from the very process of living among them, learning from them, loving them, planning **with** them, starting with what **they** know, and building on what they already have.

What else can We say?

F. Final Notes

As Forman remarked in the speech, as We begin to **go to** the people, "We must be prepared to guard against the sabotaging of our work and the infiltration of our cadres by the FBI and the CIA and local police agents."

We should also begin to grasp more firmly that "aboveground" and "underground" work is primarily a matter of mere compartmentalization. "Clandestine" workers breath the same air as everyone else -- they simply keep their relation to organized structures to themselves, and to those with a need to know.

Re-Build!

Mwalimu Shanna
Seldom Seen

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